DT
510.43
F35
0726
1974
v.1

With my compliments
TVlm

ORAL TRADITIONS OF FANTE STATES

No. 1

A B R E M

INSTITUTE OF AFRICAN STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

LEGON

SEPTEMBER 1974

Mem
DT
+510.43
+F35
0725
1974
v.1

ata5 744
NOV 29 1977

Contents

Preface ... ...

Introduction ... ...

History of Berase ... ...

" " Sarman ... ...

" " Ankaase ... ...

" " Agona ... ...

" " Esiam

Appendicies

P R E F A C E

In June 1973, I discussed with the late Dr. K. Y. Daaku, my friend and colleague, the need to collect and record the traditional histories of the Fante states to supplement his own collections in the Twi-speaking areas. Our aim was to record the traditional histories of the Akan-speaking peoples for preservation at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon. Unfortunately, his untimely death, in the early months of 1974, made it impossible for me to benefit from his unrivalled knowledge in the field of oral tradition collection. I dedicate this work to his memory.

The Fante states whose traditional histories we intend recording are from west to east: Shama, Komenda, Elmina, Cape Coast (Oguaa), Abrem,, Eguafo, Assebu, Abora, Nkusukum, Anomabo, Mankessim, Ayanmain, Ayam Denkyera, Ayam Abasa, Esiam, Ajumako, Esikuma, Ekumfi, Gomoa Assin, Gomoa Ajumako, Agona and Efutu (Winneba).

My method of approach consisted in interviews of the chiefs and people in the various states; all interviews, conducted in the Fante language were recorded on tapes and later translated into English. As much as possible, I have tried to make a literal translation of the materials in order to preserve the ideas, sentiments and concepts which were put forward by the informants.

All the tape-recorded interviews in the Fante language are available in the Library of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon.

I have also consulted documents in the National Archives of Ghana, Accra and Cape Coast in order to discover what traditional evidence there is concerning the origins, state organization and customs of the Fante states. The facts obtained from these sources have been utilised in the introductory chapter to each state and also in the appendices.

I would like to express my deep sense of gratitude to the Fante chiefs and people for their kindness and co-operation which made it possible for me to collect the relevant information; to Messrs. James Amorin and Kwadwo Mensah Arthur of Cape Coast who served as my field assistants; and to my Research Assistant, Mr. Kojo Christian and Mr. Francis Addo of the Institute of African Studies who helped in the transcriptions of the taped interviews.

Finally I am grateful to the Staff of the Ghana National Archives for their kindness and willing co-operation.

John Kofi Fynn,
Institute of African Studies,
University of Ghana, Legon.

September, 1974.

Introduction

Abrem is one of the earliest states organised by the Akan-speaking peoples of the Gold Coast (Ghana). According to their traditional accounts, the founder of the Abrem state was one Twiwia Kyirwia Kodie who migrated from Tekyiman in present day Brong-Ahafo Region of Ghana. According to them, the Abrem was in existence as a separate state long before the Europeans arrived on the Gold Coast. At that time, it had as its neighbours, the Eguafo to the south, the Efutu to the east, Jukwaamu to the north-east[1] and the Twifo and Wassa to the north and north-west respectively.

The first mention of Abrem in the European records known to the writer is a reference to the "Bermus" by Duarte Pacheco Pereira in his Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis, written around 1505. In it, Pereira noted that the "negro merchants who brought fine good gold to Sao Jergo (Elmina Castle) from distant lands included the Bermus, Atis, Hacanys, Boroes, Mandinguos" and many others.[2] Between 1520 and 1522 when he was governor of Elmina Castle, Pereira ordered "a yellow cap to be sent to the King of the Bremus" in return for his facilitating trade by ensuring that the paths to Elmina were kept open.[3] And in 1576, it was reported that "the king of the Abramus and a great multitude of (his) people" had been converted to Catholicism and baptized.[4]

In the seventeenth century, Pieter de Marees in a book on the Gold Coast, published in 1602, mentioned "Abrembon", "Foetu" and "Mandinga" as major sources of the gold which reached the European settlements on the coast.[5]

It was a Dutch Map of the Gold Coast of Guinea drawn at Moure in 1629, however, which gives much information about Abrem during this period. The Dutch cartographer shows "Abramboe" as lying directly north of Great Commendo or Guafo and Fetu. It was then bounded on the north by Wassa, Twifo and Acanij (Akani); on the west by Adom; and on the east by Atij or Etsi. Abrem was then described as "populous"

---

1. Abrem is referred to in the European records as Bramus, Abramboe, Abrambue, etc.
   Jukwaamu is now the modern Southern Denkyera.
2. Duarte Pacheco Pereira, Esmeraldo de sity Orbis strans, and ed. by G.H.T. Kimble (London, 1937) P.120
3. D. Pacheco Pereira to the factor at Sao Jorge da Mina, 8 August 1520 in A.D. Brasio (ed.) Monumenta Missionaria Africana (10 vols. Lisbon, 1952-69), 1:444-5
4. Quoted in Ralph M. Wiltgen, Gold Coast Mission History, 1471-1880 (Techny, III:1956) 23-44
   Wiltgen wrongly identified Abrem with Abura, one of the early Borbor Fante settlements.
5. Pieter de Marees, Besohryvinghe ende historische bechael van Guinea ed. S.P. L'honor e Naber (The Hague, 1912) p.84

and its people as primarily engaged in agricultural pursuits. There were also traders from Abrem who come weekly to Moure to exchange gold for cloth and iron. Some of these Abrem people also settled permanently in Moure to facilitate this trade.[1]

The available evidence in this century indicates that the Abrem fought numerous wars with its neighbours particularly the Eguafo, the Fetu and the Akanists. In 1629 the people of Abrem were described as being "good warriors" who had, a decade previously, fought with the Akanists but they had been defeated and most of their towns destroyed.[2]

In one of these moments of crisis, Kwaw, the captain of the Akanists residing at Elmina happened to be at Efutu and the Fetu king enlisted his support because "the people of Abremboe are always in fear of the Acanists and those of Fetu of the Abrembouwers".[3] Muller states that one cause of the friction between Abrem and Fetu was the ambition of "Hennefried", a great "Duke" of Fetu, whose lands bordered on Abrem. This chief "sought to force the king of Abrem under his dominion".[4] A fundamental cause of the friction between the two states in the 1640s was that the king of Fetu who had married a sister of the king of Abrem suddenly divorced her and sent the Abrem noblewoman in disgrace to her people. The king of Abrem was naturally offended and demanded 300 great bendas or 8 Marks - 3 oz. gold as compensation for the sister. The Fetu ruler, however, offered to pacify the Abrem king with a sum of fifty-six bendas (112 oz.) of gold, but this was rejected as insufficient and Abrem invaded Fetu only to retreat almost immediately.[5]

---

1. WIC.743. Caerte des Landschap Gout Kust van Atsyn tot ~~Nilfo~~ Ningo, Moure 25 Dec. 1629. See also trans. by K.Y. Daaku and A. van Dantzig, Ghana Notes and Queries 9, (Nov.1966).

2 Ibid. The "Akanists" lived north of Abrem. "Akani" probably included inter alia, the Denkyira, Wassa, Adanse, Twifo and the Assin.

3. Furley Collections. (F.C.) Elmina Journal entry dd. 2 Sept. 1646.

4. Wilhelm Johann Mueller, Die Africanische suf der landschaft Fetu. Mueller who was chaplain at the Danish fort Frederiksberg at Cape Coast from 1661 to 1669 was clearly speaking here of the incident of 1646. He notes that the Fetu, on the advice of their great god Cucu offered "a large basin full of gold" to the Abrem to avert an attack. This offer was refused and as a result the Fetu attacked "with renewed courage" and won the day.

5. F. C. Elmina Journal, entry dd. 8 Dec. 1646. The Dutch noted that the Abrem noblewoman was the 'Senior wife' of the king of Fetu.

In the eighteenth century, information about Abrem becomes more scattered and fragmentary. In 1709, Sir Dally Thomas, the British Agent-General at Cape Coast Castle (1703-1711) described the people of Abrem as "but a poor inconsiderable people .... not having 500 arms in the country and yet very troublesome" even kidnapping Asante traders.[1] His successors however found it necessary to give a "Dashee" to Abrem "Head chief" for his "preserving a free and open passage" to the coast.[2] In the 1720s both the Dutch and the English traders found it necessary to present gifts to the Abrem chiefs in order to keep open the trade routes.

In 1834, the British proposed to grant the town of Jukwa, sixteen miles north-west of Cape Coast, and the area surrounding it, to the Denkyira who had sought refuge in the British "Protectorate" as a result of Asante incursions into their own country. Captain George Maclean's action decided the king of Abrem to claim that Jukwa, along with the towns of "Ebriassie, Ankanguesie, Angona, Essiem and Simbieo" belonged to his stool. The Abrem ruler followed this up by seeking protection of the Dutch at Elmina with the hope that if Jukwa were under Dutch protection the British would not attempt to settle the Denkyeras there. Maclean, however, asserted that "the chief of Ojuguaw is a Cape Coast Caboceer" and therefore under British protection and persisted in settling the Denkyeras there.[3]

By the early twentieth century, Abrem had declined rapidly and when the British Administration on the Gold Coast Colony sought to formalize its rule by the introduction of Native Jurisdiction Ordinances passed between 1908 and 1910, Abrem found itself as a division of Cape Coast traditional area.[4]

---

1. T.70/26 Sir Dally Thomas to the Royal Africam Company, 26 Nov. 1709.

2. T.70/381 Accounts and Journals. 6 March, 1714 and 9 March 1716.

3. G. E. Metealfe, Maclean of the Gold Coast (London, 1962) pp. 80; 88-9.

   Apart from Simbew (Simbico) which is now part pf the Elmina state and Jukwa which is the capital of Denkyira state, all the towns still remain part of Abrem state.

4. On the various Native Jurisdiction Ordinance, see for example, David Kimble, A Political History of Ghana, 1858-1928 (Oxford, 1963), pp. 462-9

   and F. Agbodeka, African Politics and British policy in the Gold Coast 1868-1900 (London, 1971) pp. 113-7

   G.N.A. (Ghana National Archives) Commissioner, Central Province, to Secretary for Native Affairs, Cape Coast, 26 August, 1929.

The Abrem people however never accepted their subordinate status without protest. As early as January 1911, Kwesi Amoasie who became "Head chief" of Abrem in 1909 stated thus in a letter to the District Commissioner at Elmina: "I Have received a letter from the Omanhene of Cape Coast dated 4 Jan, 1911 stating that you have directed him to apply to me to furnish you through him names of villages and their respective sub chiefs under my stool; and to this I have not complied with his request as the Abraim Nation is a complete jurisdiction and comprises of Berasie, the capital, and Agona, Ankawasse, Sarman, Brokorsu and Assiam all under the stool of Berasie".

His successors from 1922 began a twenty-five year effort to prove "a claim to independence which it had never lost". In their arguments based on traditional history, the Berase chiefs either claimed that the Abrem people were Fante or that the Abrem were "a distinctly different tribe from the Fantees, the Elminas or Eguafos". They argued that the Abrem state was established long before Efutu with which they identified Oguaa (Cape Coast) traditional area.

The efforts of the Berase chiefs resulted in an Enquiry held before the Central Provincial Council of chiefs in 1929. Nana Kojo Mbra III, the Omanhen of Oguaa who was opposed to the establishment of the Provincial Council of Chiefs, refused to attend the Enquiry. And the uncontradicted testimony of the Abrem persuaded the Provincial Council of chiefs to recommend that Abrem be granted paramount status. However, this recommendation was rejected by the British Colonial authorities on the grounds that "the procedure adopted for the Enquiry was wrong" since the dispute was "not between a Paramount Chief and a Divisional Chief" but rather "a claim to independence made by a state which deposes that it had never acknowledged the sovereignty of any other state".

This British decision was specious because it was neither backed by history nor logic. But in spite of the fact that this explanation neither enlightened nor satisfied, there were a number

---

1. G.N.A. ADM 23/1/214. Berase Native Affairs Case No. 6/11 Kwesi Amoasie, Head chief of Berase to District Commissioner, Elmina, 5 Jan. 1911.

G.N.A., Cape Coast, CCP to Central Province Council of chiefs, 6 Sept. 1929.

G.N.A. Cape Coast. Letter from Abrem chiefs to Secretary for Native Affairs 9 July, 1925.

Ibid. Petition of Abrem chiefs to Governor Slater, 29 Oct. 1929.

See, for example, S.N.A. Cape Coast, ADM 23/1/493 Petition by Kwesi Oforie II chief of Berase to Sir John Maxwell dd. 7 July, 1927.

Ibid. Findings of 1928/29 Hearings dd. 14 May, 1929.

of reasons for the government's decision. First of all, there there was disunity in Abrem itself and all the Berase chiefs who championed the cause of Abrem independence were either destooled on flimsy grounds or were forced to abdicate apparently with the connivance of the Cape Coast authorities. Secondly, the absence of Nana Kojo Mbra III, regarded by the Colonial Government as one of the progressive chiefs in spite of his differences with the government on the institution of the Provincial Councils, may have offended the British sense of "fair play". Thirdly, the British authorities must have been alarmed at the process of fragmentation among the stools of the colony which their actions have made possible.

Nevertheless, the Berase chiefs continued to press for their independence. On 10th September, 1936 Nana Buabin Panyin II, chief of Berase petitioned His Excellency the Governor Sir Arnold Hodson praying him to grant the independence of Abrem state from Cape Coast traditional area. The signatories to the petition were, apart from the chief of Berase and his elders, Kwamina Abrukuwa II chief of Sarman, Kwamina Ayepah of Burakwasu, and Kwesi Wiredu, chief of Esiam. They claimed that the investigation conducted by the Provincial Council in 1928/29 "Conclusively shows that the Abrem people are neither Fantis, Akans or Twis or Efutus not to have had any tribal connections with even the people of Elmina or Eguafo, their nearest neighbours".

But their petition was rejected because of the continuing dissensions in Abrem. On 2nd October 1936 the Acting Provincial Commissioner, Central Province, recommended the rejection of the petition on the grounds that "the villages of Agona and Ankase two of the largest in the division, still desire to serve Oguaa".[1]

Again, the Abrem claims were resuscitated in 1944. This time all the Abrem towns supported Berase and they received unexpected support from the District Commissioner of Cape Coast. However, the Provincial Commissioner, Central Province dissented and the chief of Berase and his people were advised that "Government does not recognize the Aberem (sic) Division as an independent stool and therefore there can be no question as to the election of an Omanhene for Aberem".[2]

---

1. G.N.A. S.N.A. 430/36 Berase (Abrem) Native Affairs. Petition of Nana Buabin Panyin II, chief of Berase to H. E. Sir Arnold Hodson, Accra, 10 Sept. 1936.

   The Governor concurred in a letter through the S.N.A. Hugh Thomas dd. 22 Oct. 1936.

2. G.N.A. Cape Coast. Fieldgate CCP. to D.C. Cape Coast 18/1/1944.

   Ibid Same to same 1 May 1944.

   Ibid D.C. Cape Coast to Kweku Atta, Head chief of Berase dd. 8 July, 1947.

After independence, however, the Nkrumah Government recognized the independence of Abrem on purely political expediency. This decision was reversed by the National Liberation Council which succeeded the Nkrumah Administration in 1966. But by carefully sifting the evidence based on history, the Busia Government again granted the independence of Abrem.

The state of Abrem today consists of the towns of Berase, Ankasi, Sarman, Abrem-Agona and Esiam which are located about 15 miles north of Elmina. The population of these towns in the 1970 census was 7,720.

The people of Abrem have always been farmers. Their agricultural products include such crops as maize, plantains, bananas, cocoyams, yams and vegetables. They also cultivated palm trees and derived from them palm wine, palm oil and kernels and the gin known locally as Akpeteshie. In ancient times, they used these farm products as food but also they sent some to the coastal areas to exchange them for smoked fish and salt.

Trade was also an important activity of the people of Abrem. In a recent article, David P. Hennige, commenting on the description in the Portuguese and Dutch records of Abrem as a major source of gold, pointed out that this "probably reflected its crucial role as middleman in the shipment of gold from the gold-producing areas in Denkyira".[1] Admittedly, some gold must have passed through Abrem from these northern districts since Abrem lay astride a major route from Wassa and Twifo to the coast.[2] However, it is clear from the numerous gold pits which abound in Abrem that in the olden times the people of Abrem were gold diggers. Indeed my information is that the Abrem not only extracted gold from the soil but also women and children collected gold dust from river beds especially after a heavy down pour of rain.

Before the arrival of the Europeans, gold dust and salt were sent to "Sarem" (i.e. the north) to exchange them for cotton cloths and slaves. I was also told that some of the Abrem merchants who went as far as Bonduku in modern Ivory Coast exchanged their salt for gold dust and some elephant teeth (ivory).

---

1. David P. Henige 'Abrem Stool: A contribution to the History and Historiography of Southern Ghana in The International Journal of African Historical Studies ed. N. R. Bennet Vol. 6. No. 1 1973 p. 4.

2. In the seventeenth century Wassa was described as being "very rich in gold". See, for example, the 1629 Map.

Abrem society was organised on the lines of an Akan state. Apart from the fact that the seven exogamous matrilineal clans are found in all the Abrem towns and villages, succession to stools and property is also based on the matrilineal type of social organisation.

Before the introduction of hristianity and Islamic religions, the people of Abrem worshipped their dead ancestors and gods. The intermediaries between them and the gods were the Akɔmfo or Fetish Priests. These Akɔmfo understood the language of the gods and they interpreted the wishes of the gods to the people.

The Abrem people have three main festivals: (1) Nyɛyi, (2) Adwedi and (3) Eguado to.

Nyɛyi is the festival instituted to remember the dead ancestors. During the celebration of this festival, the various family heads pour libation on the family shrine to the ancestors and pray to them for prosperity and increase in the size of the family.

Adwedi (the eating of yams) marks the harvest of new yams and other crops. It is a festive occasion when there is feasting and merry making throughout the land.

Eguado to (presentation of food to ancestral stools) is the time when chiefs give food and drinks to their dead ancestors symbolised by the stools which they had occupied. As at the time when they celebrate Nyɛyi festival, the chiefs pray to their dead ancestors to guide their conduct and to help them to rule wisely and improve the material and spiritual conditions of their peoples.

B E R A S E

LIBATION

Agoo.....Amee .....
Onyankopɔn ye kyerɛ wo nsa oo yɛmma wo nsa.
Asaase Yaa, nsa ne no.
Nananom nsamanfo nsa oo....oo.
Nkondwa kesee nsa
Nana Twiwia Kodie nsa oo
Amannee ne se,
Yaba ha, na amanee yede bae ne sɛ,
Owura bi, aban atu no ma waba
Obetie nananom mpanyisɛm
Na ɛne deɛ ɔde ato yɛn anim,
Wamma Okyeame Peko m'agyina ha
Ɛsɛsɛ yɛbɔ mpaee ansa na deɛ ɛsɛsɛ wokyerɛw ma no biara
Wakyerɛw ama no, ama yie atoa yie
Nana Tweneboa nsa ooo.ooo
Nana Abaka nsa oo oo, Akokoo nsa oo oo
Anteamete nsa oo oo
Nananom yɛnka mo nduwa
Abrem abosom abosompem nyinaa hom mbɔ
Kridi mmɔ trede momɛgye nsa nom.
Asɛm a ɛwɔ hɔ ne sɛ,
Ɔman biara si hɔ a,
Na ɔwɔ ne faako,
Abirem man nyinaa
Won wura ne Nana Twiwia Kodie
Ɔno na ɔde wɔn tuii,
Ɔde won firi Tekyiman de won bae,
Na sɛ ɛnɛ yebedi dwuma a ɔte sɛi,
Na Nana Omanhene ma mɛgyina ha a,
Na yɛfrɛ nananom abosompem nyinaa
Ma wɔn abegye nsa anom a,
na watumi ayɛ amane a
ma yie atoa yie,a
ama Okyena no wode ko nehoaa....
na wahu Abrem sɛm se dea
yɛn mpanyinsɛm ɔte fanti, mo mmra me gye nsa nom na
mogyina yɛn akyi,
na asɛm a yɛbɛka ɔnko to tee
wɔ nokwaremu
enti mpanyinsɛm a yɛbɛka no
nokware na yɛbɛka

.../2

na sɛ ɛkɔ totee, na yie toa yie a, na amanneɛ
biara a yɛbɛyɛ no na w'edzi mu.
Nananom mɔmmra mɛgye nsa nom.
Sɛnɛa mekae no,
Abrem man nkwa so
Abaatan nkwa so
Mmarima nkwa so,
Nana Twiwia Kodie Ababio II
ne nkwa so,
ne man nyinaa wɔn nkwa so
neɛ obeyɛ se ɔbeyɛ esian no
ɔbɛyɛ ntoto ananmu, ɔmpa ngu.
Ɔman biara a Abrem man
yɛne wɔn bahyia no yen nka wɔn ngu
sɛnea yɛkaa wɔn gu yefi Tekyiman
a yɛde aba no
yɛn nyinaa yɛn nkwa so:
Nsa ne no.

English version of Libation

Great God, we show you drinks; but we don't give you drinks.
Mother Earth, we offer you drinks.
Our dead ancestors we give you drinks.
The Great Stools we give you drinks.
Grandfather Twiwia Kodie drinks
The matter is this, the Government has sent somebody
to come and listen to the history of our dead ancestors;
this is why I, Okyeame Peko, am standing here.
Before we tell them anything we would like to pray
to you so that whatever we say may be the truth and
so that the gentleman would write our story well.
Grandfather Tweneboa drinks
Grandfather Abaka drinks
Grandfather Akokoo drinks
Grandfather Anteamete drinks
Grandfathers we do not count you
All the gods in Abrem, the thousand gods of Abrem hasten
to come and drink.
The point is that every state has its founder.
The master of all the Abrem people is Grandfather
Nana Twiwia Kodie.
He brought the Abrem people from Tekyiman to this place.

..../

So that when today I am standing here, calling upon the thousand gods of Abrem to witness what we are doing here, we ask them to guide our proceedings so that the truth about our past must be told.
As I have already said, drinks to the health of the Abrem state; health to the women in the Abrem state; health to the men in the Abrem state; health to Grandfather Twiwia Kodie Ababio II. Whatever will bring evil must be prevented by you, grandfathers. Every state which Abrem state will engage in war, help us to defeat them as we defeated our enemies ever since we moved out from Tekyiman; health to all of us here assembled.

People Present:

Nana Agyeman ~~Twiwia~~ KYIRWIA Kodie Ababio II, Omanhene of Abrem
Nana Kota III, Benkumhene, Berase
Nana Brakwa III, Ankobeahene, Berase
Okyeame Kobina Peto (State linguist)
Opanin Sofi - Elder
Opanin Kweku Amoah, Asafo Supi, Berease
Okyeame Kwaku Takyi - Berase.
Kobina Egyir - Elder
Kweku Amoako - Counsellor.

Q. Where did you come from to settle at this place?

A. From Tekyiman.

Q. What means of transport did you come with from Tekyiman?

A. When our ancestors were coming they fought on the way from Tekyiman to this place on foot. When they got to the valley near Asante Mampong, they fought the Asante On the following Sunday we were attacked by small-pox which killed most of the people. The rest left with Nana Twiwia Kodie to this place.

Q. Who was the leader who brought you to this place?

A. Nana Twiwia Kodie.

..../

Q. Have you heard about clans?

A. Yes, we have many different clans. All the seven are in this town. We have the Agona (Anona) Abrade, Asona, Ahwene, Bretuo, Koona and Intwa.

Q. Is this Bretuo clan the same which is referred to in Fante as Twidan?

A. It is the same thing.

Q. Have you heard about Ntoro or Egyabosom?

A. Everybody is placed in the Ntoro to which his father belongs.

My father belongs to the Busumtwi group so I am also of that group.

Q. Apart from Busumtwi what are the other Ntoro groups?

A. Bosompra, Bosomtwi, Nketia, Abaka.

Q. How did you acquire this?

A. Egyabosom is one's own soul (kra). Your own spirit (sunsum) which you bring from God. I got mine from my father.

Q. What are greetings associated with the Ntoro?

A. Ahenewa, Abraw, Anyaado, Obri, Emu.

Q. Did you come from Mampong to this place or you stopped at some other places.

A. When we came to this area, we first settled at Buraso with the Wassaws, and then at Akropong in Denkyira. We had difficulties here. We could not get anything to buy, an example being salt. So Nana Ahinfrie sent his messenger called Kratia to look for a place near the sea. This messenger after many wanderings, arrived at a village where there was an old woman, called Guedu Ampapa, from /there Elmina, who was staying / with her group. He asked her whether the distance from the village to Edina was long, and she replied that it was only a short distance to Edina. So the messenger came back to inform Nana Ahinfrie, since at this time Nana Kodie was dead, so they arrived here after moving from Akropong. There was a tree called Bera under which we settled and this is how this town acquired the name Berase - under the Bera tree.

Q. Did you meet any people at this place?

A. We did not meet anybody here. The last to arrive here was the Nkyidomhene who went by way of Anomabu. The Anomabu chief sent a linguist of his to send this people to Elmina, the Elminahene /them also appointed his linguist to take / to Berase. When the Nkyidomhene and his people arrived they were settled at Esiam.

Q. So did you not meet any people called the Etsi or Fetu, or Eguafos here?

A. When my ancestors came here they did not meet anybody here. But anybody who came from Tekyiman is an Etsi. We did not meet anybody when we came, because this land was a forest. We did not buy it or beg for the land.

Q. So it means that anybody who came from Tekyiman is an Etsi? Could you explain further?

A. An Etsi refers to an independent person - a person who is not under the domination of anybody.

Q. With whom did you share common borders ?

A. Edina, Eguafo, Wassaw and Denkyira.

My border with the Wassaws is the Pra river.

Q. What about the Fetus?

A. I also share a border with the Fetus. Our border is the Suriwi river. So there is the saying that "Fetu adjoins Abrem". From Suriwi then one comes to the residence of my Nkyidomhene.

Q. When you arrived at this place and met the Eguafos and Fetus and later shared borders with them, what was the exact relationships between your people and those peoples?

A. We have stayed peacefully.

Q. What language did you speak when you first arrived here?

A. Twi. We speak the Abrem dialect. This dialect could be explained 'that on the fact/we could speak Wassaw or Fanti so our dialect is a mixture of the two. Our language is so because we are between the Fantes and the Wassaws.

Q. So it means apart from the Wassaw and Fanti influence on your language, this language of yours has not changed much?

.../

A. Yes, we still speak Twi.

Q. How was your state founded?

A. My ancestors came with his war leaders. He came with the Gyasehene, Twafohene, Nkyidomhene, Nifahene and directed where every chief had to be. This explains why the Nkyidom who came via Anomabu are settled at Esiam. He came with his own war leaders from Tekyiman. (War leader i.e. Safohene).

Q. How did you acquire the name Abrem?

A. The leader who came with us, Nana Twiwia Kodie chose Berase, i.e. Under the Bera tee) as the capital and the whole state is thus referred to as Abirem.

Q. Of what clan was Nana Kodie?

A. He is of the Anona clan.

Q. Why was Nana Kodie made Omanhene?

A. While he was at Tekyiman he was already a leader with his group under him. He came with a stool from Tekyiman. Also he was the leader of the migrants from Tekyiman. So he became the automatic leader of his people.

Q. Is his clan still the ruling house?

A. Yes. It is the same clan (Agona.)

Q. Do you have Queenmothers in your state?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you have a queenmother like the Asante do have or its your mother whom you refer to as the queenmother?

A. Yes. I have one but she has no stool like the Asante Queenmother.

Q. Please can you explain further?

A. The royals of this state do elect a senior woman to be the queenmother or if an elderly woman is absent any woman who is deemed to be fit would be chosen as the Ohemmaa, i.e. queenmother, to look after the state together with the omanhene.

Q. Is the queenmother the mother of the Omanhene or the sister?

A. Either of the two can be the queenmother.

Q. Could you give a list of kings, who have sat on the stool of Abrem?

A. I cannot remember all but I will make an effort to give you as many as possible:- Nana Twiwia Kodie. Nana Berampong. Nana Ahinfirie (who came with them to Berase). Nana Buabeng I. Nana Kwasi Fori I. Nana Kwaku Atta. Nana Kwasi Fori II (destooled because of drunkeness). He (Nana Kwasi Fori II) came on again

.../

he was destooled and then enstooled again and destooled on grounds of old age. Nana Kobriko. Nana Kwaku Gyapea. Nana Nyamekye. Nana Twiwia Kodie Ababio II. When I came on the stool, we had a dispute with Oguaa, since the state did not help me to win the case I abdicated, I came on the stool again, and was destooled.
Nana Twiwia Kodie Ababio II (settled dispute with Oguaa and won, and attempted destoolment again which he won).
Nana Twiwia Kodie III - destooled by N.L.C. decree.

Q. Who were the kings of the neighbouring state during the time of Amoaesi (Nana Kwasi Fori II)?

A. The Paramount chief at Cape Coast was Nana Mbra I. At Eguafo was Abotakyi I, at Elmina, Nana Ntikudi.

Q. Which of the above mentioned chiefs do you remember most for his good deeds?

A. Nana Kwasi Fori I. He planned streets in the town. He managed to gather back people who went astray.

Q. Which other chiefs do you remember again?

A. Nana Kweku Atta. Nana Buabeng II. Nana Kwesi Fori II (brought the Tribunal to the Abrem state). At the time of Kweku Atta the ruling chief at Elmina was Nana Kobina Gyan. These three together with Abotakyi of Eguafo joined the British expedition against the Asantes during the Karikari war at the time of Governor Rodger.

Q. What is your oath?

A. "Kwasida ne Mpete". This is because of the smallpox which hit our group after the fight against the Asante in the valley of Asante Mampong, which saw a majority of our people losing their lives.

Q. Do you have any other oaths?

A. We have the Asafo oath. This is because one of our war leaders went to a war, on Wednesday and so we have "Asafo Wukuda" oath.

Q. During which chief's time did you acquire the "Kwasida ne Mpete" oath?

A. Omanhene Nana Twiwia Kodie I.

.../

Government and Institutions

Q. How is the Abrem state governed?

A. I have my war leaders (Nsafohene). So I consult them in all matters. I do not rule the state alone. I have the Gyase, Kyidom, Twafo, Nifa, Benkum and Krontihene who is the same as the Mankrado.

Q. What are the functions of these wing chiefs?

A. They are the divisional chiefs ruling various parts of the state. When there is an important case, I consult all of them. The Omanhene has also to approve of a newly elected wing chief and he has to send a representative or himself to the enstoolment. After this the wing chief has to come to the capital to swear the oath of allegiance to the Omanhene.

He (Divisional chief) swears in this way:

Omanhene Nana Twiwia Kodie,
Anytime you call on me
Be it day or night,
I will come and listen to your call
If I do not do so,
Then I am at fault.

Q. Did the divisional chiefs have the right to judge cases in the former days?

A. He could sit on minor cases, but on major cases he had to send them to my court.

Q. Before the whitemen came whose court was the final court?

A. The Omanhene's court. The Omanhene's court was final.

Q. What are the functions of the Bamuhene?

A. When the chief dies he hears of it first before anybody. He is very close to the Omanhene.

Q. Do you have executioners?

A. I have some. They have been here since the days of old and reside in the state capital.

Q. What are the rules of succession in your state?

A. It is by the matrilineal way.

Q. Does this apply to the wing chiefs or divisional chiefs?

A. It is still the same.

..../

Q. Did your state have a standing army in the ancient days?

A. We did not have a standing army. The soldiers consisted of the Asafo companies. When there was a war the drums of the state were beaten entreating everyone to gather his arms and fight against the enemy.

Q. How was it instituted? (i.e. the Asafo company)?

A. The early leaders of this state made a drum which was played in times of emergency. This they brought from Tekyiman. The role of this drum was that whenever somebody provoked the state, it was beaten so that the people could gather round. It could also be played when somebody got missing in the forest.

Q. So then this Asafo preceeded the arrival of the whitemen?

A. Yes, this was started by the early ancestors who made the drum and started the Asafo Companies.

Q. Before the arrival of the whitemen with what did you use to fight?

A. We used knives and sticks and later spears and bows and arrows.

Q. When did you acquire guns?

A. The arrival of the Portuguese brought guns to us.

Q. At the reign of which chief did you start acquiring guns?

A. Nana Ahinfiri's time. 2nd Respondent Nana Buabeng.

Q. Which of these two came earlier as the king of Abirem?

A. Nana Ahinfiri.

Q. Before the arrival of the whites what were your main occupations?

A. We were farmers, cultivating cassava, plantain and cocoyam; we also planted palm trees.

Q. What are the uses of the palm tree?

A. Plam oil. Palm wine. Fuel. Pomade.

Q. Did you not sell some of this palm oil?

A. We sold some to our neighbours.

...../

Before the arrival of the whitemen we traded on the barter system. For instance, salt was exchanged for plantain.

Q. Have you heard about salt?

A. Yes.

Q. Where was the main area of supply?

A. Elmina. This was what led to Twiwia Kodie sending messengers to look for good land. When they were on this scouting mission they met an old woman, Gyedu Apapam, who came from Elmina but had settled in present Abrem, who told them of the abundance of salt at Elmina.

Q. What did you use the salt for?

A. We used it for domestic pruposes.

Q. Did you not trade in salt?

A. Our ancestors uded "Asante pakan" to purchase salt and send it to Kumasi and beyond to sell before the arrival of the whitemen. Some want on these trips for about a month before returning home.

Q. How did they send the salt to the interior?

A. We exchanged palm oil for salt at Elmina. This salt was sent to the interior and paid for in Gold. This preceeded the arrival of the whitemen. So our ancestors got more gold to trade without this salt business.

Q. In what was the salt put when it was being sent to the interior?

A. They put it into plantain leaves which were then put into the "pakan".

Q. Did the traders carry this themselves?

A. They sometimes hired people to carry this commodity into the interior.

Q. What was the average time that a trader would go on this journey?

A. Those who took a small quantity of salt took about a week and those with a greater quantity took about a month. They did all this on foot and went to Fomena and the area of modern Kumasi, and beyond to Mampong, Berekum, Techiman and Dormaa Ahenkro areas.

Q. Have you heard about kola?

A. Yes. The early people of thisstate purchased kola and sent it to the North, to the Hausa traders. They also sent to the North.

.../

Q. Was it cultivated or obtained from the forest?

A. We obtained it from the forest. It was not until the arrival of the Europeans that we started cultivating kola.

Q. How was the Omanhene cared for?

A. We gave some of the foodstuffs we had produced on our farms. He was also given land to farm on. We also helped in weeding his farm and harvesting his crops.

Q. What is the practise now?

A. He, (Omanhene) is now paid by the Government. He has also been given a cocoa farm from which he obtain money through the sale of cocoa.

Q. So do you still work for the Omanhene?

A. Yes, we do weed for him at the end of every year.

Q. What happens in the case of fines obtained from cases brought before the court?

A. He is given one-third of the fine and we take the remaining two-thirds.

...../

POST EUROPEAN PERIOD

Q. Who were the first Europeans to arrive on the coast?

A. The Portuguese.

Q. At which king's reign was this?

A. Nana Ahinfiri.

Q. What was the relationship between you and the Europeans?

A. We traded with them. We exchanged palm kernels etc., for plates, buckets, cloth before the arrival of the English.

Q. Before the arrival of the Portuguese, what cloth were you using?

A. Kyenkyen cloth, which was the bark of a tree which had been beaten unti it had attained a soft texture.

Q. Did you obtain any other cloth apart from the kyenkyen ?

A. Yes, kyenkyen cloth from the north made of cotton and woven.

Q. What about kente?

A. This became known during the time of the English.

Q. What was used in paying the Portuguese for goods purchased?

A. It was system of barter. We were also paid with silver.

Q. Did you have any currency before the arrival of the Europeans?

A. We had gold dust.

Q. Have you heard about the slave trade?

A. Our ancestors who traded into the interior brought back people as slaves. Smoked fish and later rubber were some of the goods exchanged for slaves.

Q. Were these slaves sold to the Europeans?

A. Yes. But some were bought by the Abrem people themselves to be used as domestic slaves.

Q. Did the slave trade preced the arrival of the Europeans?

A. Yes.

Q. How were these domestic slaves cared for?

A. Some were married (the females) by their masters. Others were declared to be brothers or nephews for whom they worked for. Some inherited their masters.

Q. With the arrival of the Europeans could you obtain as many slaves as you wanted for sale?

A. Yes. To obtain this you had to travel to the north, where sometimes the inhabitants there exchanged people for food because of the scarcity of food there. Monkey skins were exchanged sometimes for these slaves.

Q. Did you wage war on other states to acquire slaves?

A. No.

Q. Before the arrival of Europeans or Mohammedans what did your ancestors worship?

A. Gods. We knew about the existence of God, but it was the gods that we worshipped.

Q. Do you practise ancestral worship?

A. Yes. We do worship them. This is done annually by the pouring of libation to the departed ancestors.

Q. How do you remember them?

A. We pray to them to help us in our deliberations and we believe they have the power to help us.

Q. In what way do you know that God exists?

A. We know that God created the world but we also have a belief in the gods. We believe also that god created these gods and gave them certain powers.

Q. What about suman?

A. Suman was not created by God. It was created by man who used herbs mixed with eggs, which is referred to as suman. Some use other things like hens with this medicine to seek money. It is also used to kill human beings and cause havoc.

..../

Q. Have you heard of Nananom Mpow?

A. It is an "abosampow" i.e. Fetish Grove where annually animals like hens are sacrificed there. Food is also taken there to serve the god.

Q. How many gods do you have in Abrem?

A. There are so many gods, but the one brought by our forefathers from Tekyiman to this place is Nana Tweneboa. Others are Bosom Nketia at Agona Abrem, Patampa, Abaka, Antoamete, Kyenkyire, Akokokrowa.

Q. How do you worship these gods?

A. Annually animals like sheep and hens are sacrificed to them.

Q. Who are those who worship these gods?

A. The Abrafos, i.e. executioners and Akomfo, i.e. fetish priests and priestesses. The executioners are those who speak to the gods. The fetish priests and priestesses are those who when possessed can talk of any calamities to come. In this instance, the necessary rites are performed to prevent them.

Q. Were you worshipping the Nananom Mpow at Mankessim?

A. We worship our own ancestors which is in this Abrem State.

Q. Are you related to the "Borbor Fante"?

A. Techiman was a very wide area where many people resided. It was because of unstable nature of the state that we left Techiman. It cannot be said with all possibility that we are related to the Borbor Fante.

Q. Who came first from Tekyiman; the Abrem people or the Borbor Fante?

A. I cannot tell. But I know that we settled at this area first.

Q. What is the origin of the fetish priest and priestesses of Abrem?

A. These gods take them. Some get possessed and then they are said to be fetish priests or priestesses. Others too get missing for a period of time. Such a person is then declared to be a fetish priest or priestess.

Q. What are the functions of these fetish priests and priestesses ?

A. They prevent calamities.

.../

Q. What are their present functions?

A. There are many churches now so not many people follow these priests. Those who are the fetish priests nowadays are not sincere. They do so because of mercenary motives. This applies to many of them.

Q. Nana, do you think that the worship of these cults would last ?

A. No. It would not take a long time for those still worshipping these cults to realise that Christianity exists.

Q. What name is given to those who heal the sick ?

A. They are referred to as herbalists. Some do dream of certain herbs which will cure certain illness, when they apply them they find them effective. This is different from fetish priests and priestesses.

ANCIENT SITES RELICS AND REGALIA

Q. Do you have any ancient sites here?

A. Yes. There is one called kurodada, meaning old town. That place is a sacred one. Some of the people were buried there. It is about one mile from here. There is also Twenebanho, where some of the ancestors too stayed. It is also a sacred ground.

Q. Have there been any litigations over land boundaries between your state and any of the neighbouring states?

A. Eguafo. But this has been settled. In the case against Wassa, we came out successful. All these cases were settled at the Cape Coast High Court and all the necessary documents connected with it are available at the Government archives. The Eguafo case was settled amicably but we won our case with the Wassaws.

Q. Have there been any internal constitutional disputes over succession and destoolment of the king, wing chiefs etc.?

A. After I had come back to the throne, after the N.L.C. decree in 1966, some of my wing chiefs still did not recognize me, because they claimed that they enstooled me and thus they had the right to destool me. They appealed to the Central Region House of chiefs and this was only settled this year, 1974. We have since forgotten our differences and lived as one people.

Q. Are there any written records, books, letters (in Arabic or any of the European languages in the possession of anybody), which can throw light on the history of your state ?

A. We do not have any Arabic records, but have in our possession other records which were written in about 1927, when we had a dispute with the Oguaahene. These can be found at the archives.

Q. Do you know of anybody who has made a similar collection of the oral traditions of your states?

A. Yes, but this is a long time ago, and we have not heard of anything since then.

Q. How do you bury your dead ?

A. The family meets and then decide to send a deputation to the king through his linguist by sending a sum of 25 pesewas to him.

.../

After this the family decides to bathe him, libation is then poured and then he or she is put in the coffin ready to be buried. A week after libation is poured again, and then a date is fixed for the funeral. At the funeral wake is kept and then the following day we sit in state to receive donations from the people.

Q. What about the sons ?

A. The sons and daughters bury the dead parents in this state. If he or she has no children then the clan takes responsibility.

Q. How are marriage rites performed here ?

A. First, the man has to send an envoy to the girl's father informing him of his intention to marry the girl, accompanied by a bottle of spirits. After this, if this is approved then, the man has to go and pay the knocking fee which is ¢2.10 called in the olden days "Surubo". After this follows the "tiri nsa", which is ¢8.00 or Esuenu.

Q. Have you heard about benda ?

A. Yes ¢14.00 and pregwan is ¢16.00, dadako is 45 pesewas.

Q. Do you have any emblems ?

A. Yes. "Abirem Twereboafo ayenam akoko soa enkum nipa. Ɔne wo ne wo nkɔda wo ɔkyerɛ wo owia."

Q. What is the explanation for this?

A. It means that the king looks after his people. If a stranger comes and he is not wanted he is shown a path and asked to leave.

Q. Do you have <u>state swords</u>?

A. Yes. In the olden days this was what was used by the leader of an army as a symbol of his determination to fight the enemy. The capture of a state sword brought about disputes between the two states concerned. Any stool without a state sword cannot be recognised as being a proper stool.

Q. What about festivals ?

A. Our festival is called "Adwidi". This is celebrated in November, on the first Friday. On Thursday night, muskets are fired to usher in the celebrations. The whole Asafo companies go to the grove of the god Tweneboa, put the place in order for the

.../

festival. After the paramount chief goes to sacrifice to the god Tweneboa and offer prayers for the state and after coming back fire the musket. After this, the people can mourn for their departed ones. On Friday, the Asafo companies go from house to house singing and beating drums in remembrance of the departed ancestors. In the afternoon at about 3.00, the paramount chief goes to offer drinks to the smaller stool and later on the paramount chiefs and sub-chiefs and their people go to the fetish Tweneboa to sacrifice again, informing the fetish that the festival had ended. Sacrificial offerings included hens, eggs, yams, sheep and drinks. The whole people are going to the fetish grove. After this, some of the water is taken from the fetish and sprinkled throughout the whole town. Then comes a durbar amidst merry making. After this the whole festival ends. This is the only festival in the state. All my divisional chiefs do celebrate their festival before the paramount chief does so.

Q. Do you discuss state matters with the wing chiefs at the festivals?

A. Yes. We think about ways of improving the state and bringing unity to the state. If a wing chief absents himself he has a case to answer.

Q. Do you have funeral dirges ?

A. Yes, we call it "ayinan".

Q. What about linguists staffs ?

A. Yes. The first is called "Nyansapow" - meaning it takes a wise man to untie a knot made by the sages. The second - "Ɔsebɔ wamma adowa n'ayi amma" - meaning "If the tiger had been absent, many animals would have been at the funeral of the antelope", The third - "Sɛ w'ani anhu a, w'aso nso ante" - meaning "If your eyes /too did not see your ears /did not hear."

Q. What about the Omanhene's umbrella ?

A. On top of it is the symbol meaning - Ɛsono kokroo adowa ne panyin". - meaning "Though the elephant is huge the antelope is the elder."

A B R E M-S A M A N

RESPONDENTS: Atta Panin, head of Eko na clan
Kojo Abotsi Asensu
Nana Kwabena Asensu
Nana Kofi Takyi, Oman panin
Nana Apea Adjei, Adontenhene of Saman
Kwasi Mensah, Senior linguist.

LIBATION

God this is drink
We have called you today to offer you drink.
This Thursday these officials have been sent to come here
and listen to our traditional history.
This is why all the elders have met here today.
O God, this is drink.
This is Okyeame Mensah pouring libation
Barima Akotroto this is drink
Nana Adjei, this is drink
Nana Abu Kuffour, this is drink
Barima Kojo Joh, this is drink
Nana Akotoroto II, this is drink.
We ask for your help in this deliberations
So that everything goes on well,
Obosom Kwakye Ameyaw this is drink
Obosom Dum Kwaku this is drink
Obosom Bokuru this is drink
Please we ask God to make everything easy for us.
This is what we ask.

Q. What is the name of your town?

A. It is called Saman and it is in Abrem state.

Q. Where did you come from to settle in this area?

A. The state of Saman came from a river called Brokuwa.

Q. Where can one find Brokuw.?

A. It is on the land of Saman called Adakamu.

Q. What is the meaning of Adakamu, does that mean you did not migrate from somewhere?

A. We came out from a river.

Q. When you came out from a river which people were sharing borders with you?

A. Jukwaamu, Efutu, Eguafo and Wassa.

.../2

Q. How did you acquire the name of Saman?

A. It was acquired because our ancestors fought with ghosts.

Q. How did you fight with ghosts?

A. There was an epidemic in our village which killed most of our children. When we consulted our gods we were told that it was the work of ghosts. We took arms and went to the cemetery and shot a bullet each into the graves. The ghost retaliated by causing the death of many other people, 10 or 15 people died in a day. The population was then about 3,500. We escaped and hid in various places.

Q. Name some of the hiding places?

A. Juadurom in Wassa, Adwumasa, Ekumfi, Abodo in Asebu, Esiam, Aboransa, Beposu - Dunkwa, Agona and Ankaase.

Q. Did you not come from Takyiman with the Berase people?

A. No.

Q. Does it mean that the people of Berase came to meet you here?

A. Yes.

Q. What agreement did you have with them?

A. We welcomed them happily, since many of our people had lost their lives during the war with the ghosts, our numbers were small, so we came under them.

Q. Who are some of the people from Takyiman?

A. Agona, Ankaase, Essiam and Berase.

Q. Where did the rest of Abrem people come from?

A. From Takyiman.

Q. Who was then your chief during whose reign you fired on fought with the ghosts?

A. Kojo Adjei Apatrato I, Apatrato was a title given to him, because when there was a case before one of his sub-chiefs he went for it to his palace and charged heavily before settling the case.

Q. Was he your first chief?

A. Yes.

Q. Was he the one who brought you out from the river?

A. Yes, after he had led us to fight against the ghosts and our town, Saman, has broken up he fled with his stool regalia back into the river from which we had originally come from, no one saw him again.

.../3

Q. Have you heard of clans?

A. The chief's clan is called Anona, and we have Ako na, Asona, Ntweafo and Abrade.

Q. How did this family or clans system originate?

A. It is an old institution. which was handed over to us by our ancestors.

Q. Do you know of Ntoro or Egya bosom?

A. When one is born he belongs to the father's Agyabosom so he presents things like a goat and yam to the Agyabosom so that his ntoro is made for him.

Q. Are there different types of Ntoro?

A. Some are called Bosompra, Bosomuru, Nketia, Bosomtwe, Konsi and Abaka.

Q. Did you not meet some people on your first appearance here?

A. We only had people who shared borders with us such as the Eguafo, Efutu, Jukwamu and Wassa.

Q. Are these people all Etsis?

A. Jukwaamu, Eguafo, Efutu are Etsis.

Q. Were all these people living in states governed by their own rulers?

A. Yes.

Q. Did they have chiefs?

A. Yes.

Q. When you first appeared here what was the name of the Eguafo's chief and the Jukwaamu's chief?

A. Eguafohene was called Abotakyi
Efutuhene was called Tweneboa
Jukwaamuhene was called Bempong Owusu
Wassahene was called Enimir Kwao

Q. Since these people were already settled when you emerged from the river what were the relationsip between you and them?

A. On our first arrival whenever the need arose for any message between us we sent our envoys or messengers, there was peace and understanding between us.

Q. What language did those sharing borders with you speak?

A. Fiase, Eguafo, Efutu and Jukwaamu languages.

Q. Were all these languages Twi or Fanti?

A. They are all Etsi languages but a little bit different dialects. Also Abrem language is different.

..../

Q. How do you speak Abrem and Efutu languages?

A. The Abrem say "Me se see", and the Efutus "Mede" "I say".

Q. A saying of yours is that "Efutu is the continuation of Abrem" What is the meaning?

A. Originally, there was no settlement between Saman and Efutu but with the arrival from Techiman of Abrems peoples settled at Berase and Essiam which is between Saman and Efutu, this is why we say Efutu is the continuation of Abrem.

Q. Why is your state called Abrem?

A. Abrem means a big state or area because we have all come together to form the big state of Abrem.

Q. Does it mean that before the arrival of Birases, Abrem was in existence?

A. We had a town called Abrem before the arrival of Berases.

Q. When the people of Tekyiman came to meet you Etsis, what language were you speaking?

A. We spoke Fante like the Anomabu, Mankessim and Abora dialects. Those from Takyiman also spoke so many different types of Twi dialects.

Q. Name the successive chiefs who had ruled Saman after the first chief who brought Saman into being?

A. Kojo Adjei Apatrato I.
Nana Bugye (He helped to resettle the few Samans).
Abu Kuffour
Kwakye Ameyaw
Afripong I
Afripong II
Abora Katakyi
Kofi Emu
Kojo Mensah
Kwabena Grebeng
Kojo Adjei II
Barima Kwaku Danquah I
Kwaku Danquah II
Kofi Ntsiako
Kojo Adjei III
Kwakye Ameyaw III

Q. Who is the best remembered chief and why?

A. Kojo Adjei II, Kojo Adjei III, Kwamina Abroba.
During their reigns there was peace, understanding and stability. There were no frequent wars during their reigns.

.../5

Q. Which chief fought the greatest number of wars during his reign ?

A. Kojo Adjei Apatrato I.

Q. Whom did you fight with?

A. Ankaase.

Q. Why did you fight with them, was it over land?

A. Yes, an instance was over land. Also we fought with them during our festivals. The towns Saman and Ankase were at first separated by only a street when the two towns got burnt we moved to our present location.

Q. Do you know that the Takyiman chief is also called Kwakye Ameyaw? This means having the same name.

A. They just have the same name.

Q. Why were some chiefs destooled?

A. They were dictators, they did not listen to their elders and did what ever they liked.

Q. Where is your chief at present?

A. He is a teacher at Fijai Secondary School.

Q. Which of your chiefs did a significant thing other than fighting wars is best remembered?

A. It was Abroba who built a storey building and created stool properties. He got contributions from nobody yet he bought ornaments from the Ashantis to make our stool very rich.

Q. How does the chief rule this town?

A. He rules with the following Saman elders: Tufuhene, Adontenhene, Okyeame Panin and Ohemmaa. The chief of Saaman is the Gyasehene of Abrem Traditional Area.

Q. What help does he give to Abrem state or the Omanhene since he is the Gyasehene.

A. He destools and enstools Omanhene in the Abrem state. When the stool is vacant he is asked to go for a royal from the Omanhene's royal family and he goes to the royal for a candidate to be enstooled for the state. He is also the only person who rebukes the Omanhene if he is at fault or calls his attention to his mistakes. He also advises the Omanhene. When the Omanhene fails to take his advice, he has the right to destool him.

Q. What family or clan does the Gyasehene belong?

A. He belongs to the same Anona family as the Omanhene of Abrem.

Q. Have you got any festivals?

A. We have a festival in November called "Adwedi" meaning "Yam festival."

Q. Who inherits in this state?

A. We have the matrilineal type of inheritance; when a person dies he is either succeeded by his brother or his nephew.

Q. Before the arrival of the other Abrem people what was the system of inheritance in this town?

A. The nephews inherited (the sister's son) or the younger brother of the deceased.

Q. What are the arrangements towards a deceased's funeral?

A. The family comes together and makes arrangements towards the funeral, the chief of the town is informed with an amount of 50p., or drinks, which is known as "Nkae nsa". This is also known as 'Ntaku Mmiensa'. This amount is also used to inform the Asafo company to which he belongs and also to inform the deceased's children who are obliged to buy a coffin and bury their father.

Q. Is it the sole responsibility of child en to bury their father?

A. Yes, they also buy enough drinks to be used for the funeral.

Q. Before the arrival of the whiteman did you have drinks?

A. Yes, we had palm wine.

Q. Did you have the local akpeteshie by then?

A. No.

Q. Apart from consulting the queenmother to nominate a new Omanhene of Abrem what other functions does the Gyasehene perform?

A. He gives good advice to the Omanhene which are in the interest of the subjects if he does not take his advice he is destooled on the recommendation of the Gyasehene.

Q. What are your marriage rites in this town?

A. The man proposes to the woman, if the woman approves the parents are informed and if they like the man or his character then a day is fixed for the marriage rites.

Q. What are the marriage rites?

A. "Tiri Nsa" 10s.6d (¢1.05) is offered. Before the arrival of the whiteman a person paid Essoun (¢1.30), the woman's head price (tiri sika). Essuenu (¢8.00) was also paid in addition to

.../

four bottles of drinks (spirits). Formerly a big pot full of palm wine was added.

WAREFARE

Q. How did you go to war prior to the arrival of the whitemen?

A. Drums are beaten and the Safohene and his people gathered to go to war and meet the enemy.

Q. How did the Asafo originate?

A. The Asafo came from Asebu, the first of such groups was the Wombir. Men usually gathered round to the tunes of drumming and the playing of gong-gong (Dawuro). These people are the Asafo group. (Wonbir - means the first Asafo). The chief announces to the town that there is an enemy coming to attack the town through his gong-gong beaters. The Safohene gathers his men and they go to war.

Q. Before the arrival of the whitemen who did you fight an enemy?

A. We used sticks and swords. It was later that the Portuguese brought in gunpowder and guns.

Q. What is the meaning of "Kankan Aboforo"?

A. The first whitemen who came to the Gold Coast, that was the Portuguese.

Q. When did you acquire guns?

A. At the time of the Portuguese.

TRADITIONAL ECONOMY

Q. What were your occupations before the arrival of the Portuguese?

A. We were farmers cultivating palm trees, cassava and plantain. Others were traders.

Q. Did you know of salt?

A. Yes, we used it for domestic purposes.

Q. Where did you obtain the salt from?

A. From Elmina.

Q. How did you get the salt?

A. We exchanged it with our foodstuffs at the coast.

...../

Q. Did some of you sell the salt you had purchased to people farther inland?

A. Yes. Some bought it and carried it to places like Wassa Amenfi and Wassa Fiase, where they sold it. They went by foot.

Q. Did women go to sell some?

A. No. The men put the salt in a pan called "Asante Pakan" and then covered the inside with cloth. The salt was then carried away and sold. It was sent to areas like Ashanti. Ashanti traders then sent it to areas like Gyaman and Bonduku.

Q. What did you get in exchange for the salt?

A. We sometimes obtained human beings who became slaves. They became domestic slaves when they got here. The relationship that existed between them and their master's family was cordial. They are absorbed into the master's family.

Q. Did you have animals by then?

A. Yes, we had animals such as goats, hen and sheep together with wild animals.

Q. What were you trading in before the arrival of the whitemen?

A. We traded in goods like foodstuffs, fish and salt with the Elminas.

Q. Have you heard of kola?

A. Yes, we have but we have not got them in this area, they are found in Ashanti and Akyem.

Q. Did your ancestors trade in kola?

A. No. They traded in palm oil.

Q. Where did you send the palm oil?

A. We sent it to Elmina where the whites bought them in barrels and sent them overseas.

Q. How did you come about the word "Abrem"?

A. Abrem means tiredness, a name we acquired after fighting a big war.

Q. Which war was that?

A. This name we acquired after the battle at Akontamu. It was during the time of Sir. Charles Marcarthy.

...../

POST EUROPEAN PERIOD

Q. What was the relationship between you and the Portuguese?

A. We lived in peace and traded with them.

Q. How did you pay for the goods bought from the whites?

A. We paid with gold dust and silver.

Q. What did you get from the Portuguese?

A. Cloth.

Q. Have you heard of beads?

A. Yes. It was brought by the Portuguese.

Q. Were beads obtained locally in Abrem?

A. Yes, we have lands where we dig beads, e.g. Akori and Ade types of beads.

Q. Have you some here now?

A. Yes, but the man who had some has sold it to some Kwahu traders. This happened during my childhood.

RELIGION

Q. Before the arrival of the whitemen and the subsequent introduction of Christianity and Mohammedanismwhat did your ancestors worship?

A. They worshipped gods, e.g. rivers and rocks.

Q. What about the dead ones? How do you call them?

A. They are called Asaman (ghosts) and we pour libation annually to them.

Q. Why do you pour libation for them?

A. In order that they will give us strength and success in all our undertakings and also be victorous during wars.

Q. It means you believe in life after death?

A. Yes. The soul lives after death. So everything that we do we know that the dead ancestors are firmly behind us.

Q. What is meant by obosom?

A. Bosom is found in the bush, etc.

Q. Name some of your gods.

A. Adum Kwaku, Bokro, Kwaa Appiah, Tweneboa, Brukwaa and Nkuntro.

..../The tree

The tree under which originally the Saman people started building the town became a fetish called Adumkwaku together with its sister tree Adumafua. The river from which we originated; Brukwaa is also recognised as a god.

Q. Did your ancestors know a ything about God? If yes, how did they serve Him?

A. We knew of the existence of God, but we did not worship him as it is at present. But every person then knew God was great and wonderful. We also knew that the gods existed.

Q. How did you worship the Abosom?

A. At the end of every year women clad in white carrying mashed yams prepared with palm oil with eggs in a wooden bowl are presented to the obosom. All present kneel before it and everything wanted is said or asked at that time.

Q. Which people lead the procession to the place where the Obosom resides?

A. There were special custodians of the Abosom (known as executioners or Abrafo of the Obosom) who keep the Obosom. These executioners also killed human beings during funeral celebra ions of the chief and also watch over the Obosom (fetish grove).

Q. What about fetish priests? (Akomfo)?

A. Their role is similar to that of priests or pastors in our churches today. These priests were people who heard the voice of the Obosom or talked to the Obosom and delivered to the nation or town, the message from the Obosom.

Q. Have you heard of Nananom Mpow?

A. We heard that it was at Mankessim.

Q. Did your ancestors serve it?

A. The people of Mankessim brought their own fetish but our ancestors worshipped it, when we came to know of it. Our ancestors sent messengers from Abrem to pay homage to it.

Q. Does that mean people of Abrem believed in it and if one wanted something he could go to it and ask for it?

A. Yes.

Q. Where was it?

A. At Mankessim.

...../

Q. Did the people of Saman stay at certain places before finally coming over here?

A. Yes. 4 places namely, Saman Dumkwamu, about 1½ miles from this place. Saman Abobaso about 1 mile from this place. Our present location is also known as Saman Kurofoformu (New Town). Saman and Ankaase were at first only separated by a street. But we moved after a fire disaster which hit us.

Q. Are those of Ankaase Etsis?

A. No, they are not Etsis.

Q. Since your arrival here have you had any land disputes with some people?

A . Yes.

Q. Who are those people?

A. They are Berase and Ankaase.

Q. Have you got any Asafo Company? What is the name?

A. It is called Asafo Enyampa. It is something which had existed since the time of our ancestors. It is from Asebu.

Q. Apart from Asafo have you got any other dancing or playing group which existed during the time of your ancestors?

A. We had Abomaa, Mpintin, and Dumba, which was founded by young man.

Q. How is Dumba played?

A. It is a sort of play which the young men used for entertainment and we had Abomaa and Mpintin which the elders played.

Q. Did you have a Prede?

A. Yes, we have Prede.

Q. How many clans do you have in Saman?

A. Ekoona, Anona (royals) Abrade, Asona, and Tweafo.

Q. How many clans have you here in Saman?

A. Five (5) groups.

A N K A A S E

RESPONDENTS:

1.	Nana Aprako Yaw II		
2.	Nana Kwaw	-	Abakomahene
3.	Afrateng	-	Gyasehene of Ankaase
4.	Nana Kwaw Duodu	-	Benkumhene of Ankaase
5.	Kojo Bentum	-	Abusuapanin
6.	Kwame Kwanse	-	Asafo Supi
7.	Kwa Annan	-	Linguist
8.	Kwesi Appianim	-	Linguist.

LIBATION: Twi

Okyeame Kojo Bentum, Nana Aprato Yaw ne kyeame na merekasa yi:

Twedeampɔn, hyira so ma ɛnyɛ ma,

Asaase Yaa, gye nsa nom

Nkongwa, nsa oo

Nananom nso, nsa

Kwabena Tandoh, nsa

Kwɛsi Dade, nsa

Wɔfa Kwesi, nsa.

Abosom aduonum nyinaa, mongye nsa nom.

Deɛ yɛreka yi Nyame nhyira so.

Ɛnnɛ Yawda, deɛ yɛreka yi, ma ɛnyɛ nokware.

Onyankopɔn, hyira so na ɛnyɛ ahomka.

English Translation:

This is Kojo Bentum, Nana Aprako Yaw's linguist speaking:

God, please bless this meeting so that it becomes fruitful.
Mother Earth, this is drink.
The Great Stools, this is drink.
Our ancestors, this drink is for you also.
Kwabena Tandoh, this is drink!
Kwesi Dade, this is drink!
Uncle Kwesi, this is drink!
The fifty gods of this town, this is drink
God must this Thurday bless whatever we say
so that it is only the truth.
God bless this so as to make it successful.

Q. Nana Aprako Yaw II, what is the name of your town?

A. It is called Abirem Ankaase.

Q. How did you come by the name Ankaase?

A. Ankaase, means the remaining people.

Q. Where did you come from to settle here?

A. We are from Takyiman.

Q. Which people did you come with?

A. When we were coming from Takyiman we were with the Akwamus.

Q. What is it then that you are here and the Akwamus are far from here?

A. When we went to settle at Akwamu, there was a fight and we left to this place.

Q. Did you meet some inhabitants on your first arrival here?

A. We came to meet the Berase state in existence.

Q. How did you arrive at the name Abirem Ankaase?

A. That was after many, many wars and fighta, and we the remaining people took the name Abirem Ankaase.

Q. How did you (Ankaase) come to join the state of Abirem to form the Traditional area?

A. Several of our people left us and we the remaining people left to arrive here took the name Ankaase.

Q. Did you come to meet Berase in existence or you came with them?

A. When the Asante made us to spread everyone took his own way from Takyiman but when we arrived here we met Nana Berase here, so we settled with him.

Q. Did you come to meet Nana Berase as Omanhene or chief of Berase?

A. Chief of Berase.

Q. How did the chief of Berase become Omanhene?

A. The Asante made us all to spread and separate on our way from Takyiman. So when we arrived here and met Nana Berase and Nana was so good to us, he fed us, lived peacefully with us, so we decided that because of Nana's goodness we shall serve him so that he would take good care of us, but we had different oaths.

Q. Who led you from Takyiman.

A. The Twafo's led us to Ankaase.

Q. Who was your first chief who started the town of Ankaase?

A. He is known as Aprako Yaw I.

Q. Which people did Aprako Yaw I come with?

A. He came with the elders.

Q. Have you heard of families or clans?

A. Yes.

Q. What family or clan did Nana Aprako Yaw I, your first chief, belong?

A. Abrade clan.

Q. Name some clans of people who accompanied him to this place?

A. Ekoona, Anana, Asona, Abrade.

Q. How many clans have you got in Ankaase?

A. Four clans, namely: Abrade, Anana, Asona and Ekoona.
In the olden days when you go to meet somebody belonging to your clan then he is your brother.

Q. Do you know anything about Ntoro or Agya bosom?

A. Every person has got his own Agya bosom, some being Ayensu, Asankoma, Nketia, Bosomtwe, Konsi, Abakah, Sikafo and Bosompra.

An instance is when one kills animals, like ewi, akyekyere or wansane and at once someone dies in his house, and when it is known that because of the killing of that animal led to the death of that fellow then that animal becomes his Agya-bosom and his children and family take that to be his Agya-bosom.
This is how Agya-bosom came about.

Q. Did you meet any inhabitants on your first arrival here on this land of yours?

A. No.

Q. Which people did you share borders with when you first settled here?

A. Eguafo or Adesidom and Wassas.

Q. How did Eguafos get the name "Adesidom"?

A. We came to find them with that name.

Q. Have you heard of the Efutus? Do you share borders with them?

A. We share borders with the Efutus and Eguafo.

Q. On your arrival you met the Eguafo, Efutu and Anomabo, what agreement did you have with them?

A. When we were coming from Takyiman, we first reached the coast and met the Anomabo whose chief told us that since we were from the interior the coast was not suitable for us, so we should go to Oguaa, at Oguaa we were directed to Efutu and at Efutu one Opanin Kofi told us that we should go to the interior since Efutu was not good for us. He showed us a way northwards. We arrived at Esiam and our ancestors continued to this Abirem state of Ankaase.

Q. What is the meaning of the word Abirem?

A. It means after long years of fighting wars, we arrived at this place very tired and so our ancestors decided that they should settle here. So they gave the name Abirem, meaning tired after general hardships and long suffering.

Q. When you were coming from Takyiman what was your name?

A. We were known as Takyimans.

Q. Have you heard that "Borbor Fantes" are from Takyiman? Did you come with them, or you came to meet them?

A. They were first to arrive, every person was on his way.

Q. Which chief led you from Takyiman to this present place?

A. Nana Aprako Yaw I.

Q. Which language were you speaking when you were coming from Takyiman?

A. Fante.

Q. Had your language changed?

A. No.

Q. Name some of your successive chiefs since this town came into being?

A. Nana Donfonin
Nana Aprako Yaw I
Nana Kwabena Hwee
Nana Kofi Nyame
Nana Kwame Weridu I
Nana Afe Djan I
Nana Nyametia I
Nana Afe Djan II
Nana Kwame Weridu II
Nana Nyametia II.
PRESENT: Nana Aprako Yaw II.

Q. Who is the best remembered chief and why?

A. Nana Aprako Yaw I, he started this town, he made it stand well on its feet, and we lived in peace during his reigh.

Also during the time of Nana Nyametia, we had a tremendous progress in the town, he died on the stool.

Q. During which Ankaase chief's reign was he made the Twafohene of the Abirem state?

A. When we arrived here we have always been the Twafohene. We have not been to anywhere.

Q. What are your oaths?

A. "Ɛbenada" is our oath. It reminds us of our past sufferings.

Q. How did it come?

A. Ɛbenada (Tuesday) is the oath since it is meant for remembering the past. When we were coming from Takyiman, many of our people died on the way on a Tuesday, remaining about 20 people. So the day Tuesday is a very bad day for the Ankaase people.

Q. Have you got any more oaths?

A. Asafo has got "Wukuda" (Wednesday). We were once attacked by a people who killed many of the Ankaases. This defeat of the Asafo on a Wednesday gave them the oath Wukuda because it happened on a Wednesday.

Q. Which people did you fight with?

A. The Asantes.

Q. How do you rule this town called Ankaase?

A. I rule with my elders.

Q.. Who are those elders?

A. They are as follows: Opanin Kwagyedu, Benkumhene, Gyasehene - Nana Apeteen. Abakomahene - Opanin Gyima Kwoa. Kyidɔmhene - Kofi Kwawea. Twafohene - Akorma III and Nana Ahinakwa II.

Q. How were kings in your ancestors time living, where did they get money to spend?

A. There were rules in the town and anyone who goes against them was fined. The money realised was used in developing the town and the chief used some for his domedtic purposes and other things.

Q. If the chief had a farm which people weeded the farm, was it his family and himself or what?

A. If the chief needs the help of the people he says it and the inhabitants go in to help.

Q. Have you valuable minerals in this town?

A. We had some during our ancestors time?

Q. Before the Whitemen came did you have any here?

A. No, but our elders had gold dust from Kumasi called 'Esaabu); We also collected gold dust from sand after rainfall and also from river beds.

Q. What is the system of inheritance here?

A. It is by the matrilineal type?

Q. Have you got festivals?

A. Yes, it is called "Adwedi".
We have it in the first week of October, it lasts for 8 days.

Q. Have you got Ahobaa?

A. We have a small Ahobaa first and after 2 months we have the bigger one.

Q. Do people of Abirem state have Ahobaa as their Fante counterparts?

A. We people of Ankaase are the only people in Abirem which have Ahobaa.

Q. Why is it so?

A. It was because Ohene Barima Akom's father was a Fante, likewise his grandfather. So during his reign he introduced Ahobaa in Ankaase, and it has come to stay with us.

Q. Have you a state emblem?

A. We have an emblem, sword, palanquin, akyen sin (short-drums).

Q. What is the meaning of your symbol of your state?

A. Kwao - Predo - Predo.

Nana e-e-e-ko-o-o.
Kwao Bediako na wo te sɛn ni?
Me te sɛ wo ni, w'agya (wo papa)
Me ne obiara ɛnsɛ mpo a
Me ne wo ni yɛ pɛ
Na w'agya deɛ me ne no ɛnnyɛ pɛ.

Horns:

Kwoa e-e-e Kwoa Bediako
Wo te sɛn-ni o-o----?
Me te sɛ wo wo ni .
(Kwao Bediako is called Aprako Yaw)

English: Kwoa go away, go away
Nana,
Kwao Bediako how are you like?
I am like your mother and father.
If even I am not like anybody at all,
I am like your mother.
But not like your father.

Horns: Kwao, Kwao Bediako.
How are you like?
I am like your father and mother.

(Kwao Bediako is referred as Aprako Yaw).

Q. Have you got gods in this town (abosom)?

A. We have a state ɔbosom called "Mintsimirim", then asafo ɔbosom called "Kwasi Dabo"; and another asafo ɔbosom 'Ɔba Kwasi and 'Kwabena Tanɔ'.

Q. Which is the elder ɔbosom?

A. It is 'Mintsimirim".

Q. Did you come with any god from Takyiman?

A. We did not come with any god (ɔbosom).

Q. During which chief's reign did the"Mintsimirim" become your god?

A. On our arrival from Takyiman we came and met this god here and when we went and asked of his name he told us he is called "Mintsimirim", it looks after this town; so we started serving it.

Q. How are your funerals performed?

A. The family buys its own coffin and bury the deceased person.

Q. What are your marriage rites?

A. It is the father of the woman who sits down with a representative of the family. The remuneration fee or drinks are presented to the father. The father in turn presents the family's share to the family's representative.

Warfare

Q. Did you have soldiers or a standing army before arrival of Whitemen?

A. We did not have soldiers or standing army.

Q. How did you go to wars then?

A. The Asafos went to war.

Q. What is Asafo?

A. It was a group of people with able leaders and when there was war they stood in for the town.

Q. Before the arrival of Whitemen what kind of arms did the asafo fight with?

A. They fought with their hands and threw stones at each other. When it is very fierce they resorted to guns when the Whites arrived.

Q. How did asafo originate? Or what brought about the birth of asafo?

A. It iriginated from time immemorial. Every chief had asafo which helped him to rule. So it was in existence before the Whites came.

Q. How many kinds of asafo have you got in this town?

A. We have one Asafo and it is called Ankɔbea.

Q. Have you any relation with other Ankɔbea Asafos elsewhere?

A. Yes, in Essiam there is Ankɔbea Asafo so when there was war we could call upon them for help and they will come to help.

Q. How many kinds of asafo groups have you got in Abirem traditional area?

A. We have, Ankɔbea, Wombir and Eyampa. Ankɔbea means leaders so they lead the 3 asafo groups in this area.

Trade

Q. What was your occupation before the arrival of the Whitemen?

A. We were farmers; we cultivated palm trees. We had palm oil and sold it at the coast.

Q. Did you have only palm oil from the palm tree?

A. We had palm oil, palm kernel, which we sold at the coast. Also we had palm wine and the local drink called 'akpeteshie' which came later.

Q. Have you heard of salt?

A. Yes.

Q. Where did you get salt from?

A. Elmina.

Q. How did you get it?

A. It was dug from the ground.

Q. Did you go to buy it or collected it free?

A. We exchanged it with foodstuffs.

Q. What do you do with the salt?

A. For domestic purposes.

Q. Did you have some people who went for the salt and took it elsewhere?

A. We traded with it at Eguafo. People from the coast brought their salt and fish to Eguafo and exchanged it with our plantain and other foodstuffs.

Q. What do you do with the salt? Did you go and exchange it with something else somewhere?

A. No, we only used it for domestic purposes. The whole Abirem state traded at Eguafo.

Q. Have you heard that some people in Abirem state carried salt to the interior and exchanged it with other things during your ancestors time?

A. Our ancestors went for salt from the coast and carried on foot to the interior places like Kumasi.

Q. How did you take the salt to Kumasi?

A. On foot. When it gets finished, he finds other things in turn.

Q. How long do they take?

A. About 3 months. My grandfather went as far as to a French country called Bondougu and never returned.

Q. Did you have domestic animals by them?

A. Yes.

Q. What did your ancestors bring on return?

A. They brought cloth, known as "etaa", made of animal skin.

Q. Before the Whiteman's arrival what kind of cloth were you putting on?

A. Our ancestors had a kind of cloth which they put on called "kyɛnkyɛn"; this is the outer cover of a tree, which is beaten by sticks to look like fibre.

Q. What kind of trade did you have with the Portuguese?

A. We took our palm oil, and palm kernel in exchange for buckets, knives, cloth and cooking pots (iron) at Elmina.

Q. Have you heard of cola? Did you grow it yourself or it was found in the bush?

A. One can grow it, and one could go and pluck it and go to sell at the coast. Those trees found in the bush might have grown there due to birds.

Q. Before the Whiteman's arrival did they sell kola at the coast? Did you not send some to the north?

A. Our ancestors send kola to the north in big containers called "Apakan" and brought cloths in return.

Q. Did they buy slaves with their kola from the north?

A. Yes, slaves were bought with kola .

Q. When the Whiteman came did the Abirem people sell them slaves?

A. Yes, our rich ancestors traded in slaves.

Q. Did they sell all the slaves to the Whites or some were left to serve their masters?

A. Some were left to serve their masters. There are so many now living here.

Q. Did your ancestors at any time or the other take up arms against other towns for the capture of slaves for sale?

A. Not at all, only rich ancestors who went and bought them with money and came and sold them. Some also deceived them with their monies and goods such as kola to capture slaves for sale at the coast.

Q. Where precisely did they get the slaves from?

A. From the north.

Q. Were there any mark on them that identified them from other people?

A. Some had tribal marks on them; others too were marked by their masters. Also others were without marks.

Religion

Q. Before the arrival of Whites and the consequent introduction of christianity and Islamic worship, what were the objects of worship?

A. We worship idols (abosom).

Q. What is meant by ɔbosom?

A. It was created by God. We get hold of an isol, e.g. stick and purify it with blood and it becomes ɔbosom.

Q. Did you have custodians of the ɔbosom?

A. We had fetish priests who knew all about the ɔbosom.

Q. How did the fetish priest comè?

A. It was created by God. (Nana Adam). It is beyond human understanding.

The priests are messengers of the ɔbosom and they tell the nation what the ɔbosom says or wants. They are the only people who can communicate with the ɔbosom.

Q. What is suman?

A. It is like medicine, but it is worshipped like ɔbosom.

Q. What is the difference between suman and ɔbosom?

A. It is like medicine which does good and bad at the same time. When one does someone wrong his soul is taken to this suman and he dies. That is his soul is killed. Suman is worshipped, but ɔbosom is called abosom, that is one visits it yearly to present himself to it.

Q. When you poured libation you called the names of your departed ancestors, and and what does that mean?

A. It means we believe in life after death, So they heard of all that we said.

Q. Before the arrival of the Whitemen did you know of God's existence?

A. We did not know of God.

Q. Why did you know of God's name then?

A. We knew there was a Supreme God, Creator of Heaven and Earth.

Q. Have you heard of Nananom Pɔw?

A. No.

Q. Did you worship Nananom Pɔw in this Ankaase state?

A. No, it was worshipped in Fante, Mankessim.

Q. Did you settle at places before finally arriving here from Takyiman?

A. Yes, three places, namely: Tokonsuanu, just three miles from this town, Abrade, four miles from this town and Ayensosu.

Q. Do you go to pour libation at these places each year?

A. Yes, but in our ancestors time.

Q. Since your arrival, have you had any land disputes with some people?

A. Yes, the Wassas.

Q. Where have you a border with the Wassas?

A. At Pra River.

Q. Who won the case?

A. The Abirem state. (It was all the Abirem state)

Q. Have you Ankaases had any land disputes?

A. No.

Q. Have you any written records on your history?

A. No.

A B I R E M-A G O N A

RESPONDENTS:		
	Kofi Sem	
	Kwamina Prah	Chief Linguist
	Nana Korko	" "
	Kwasi Krah	Oman Panin
	Kwao Mensah	" "
	Nana Kuranchi	Benkumhene for Nana Bosom Nketia of Agona
	Yaw Mensah	Ohene Panin
	Nana Ahinfre	Obaa Panin
	Nana Kwao Nkrumah	Oman Panin
	Nana Kwaku Attah	Oman Panin
	Kwasi Mensah	Linguist
	Kwasi Bona	Linguist
	Kwasi Nyame	

LIBATION:

Great Silence

Great God we show you drinks but we do not give you drinks.
You have said that wherever two or three people have gathered there you are present,
We pray that you should preside over this our meeting and bless it.
God Brukofi, we give you drink.
God Asona Nketia we give you drink
God Amanyie, we give you drink
God Ntonankan, we give you drink
God Dumbrayie, we give you drink
God Abaka, we give you drink
God Abrawa, we give you drink
God Kwayensu, we give you drink.
All our dead ancestors, we offer you drinks.
God Nketia, you who built your state on plantain and groundnuts, we give you drinks.
Grandfather Akyeampong, we give you drinks.
Grandfather Ohene Kwakese, we give you drinks.
All those great men who have sat on the stool, we cannot count you, come and take drinks.
Nana Ado Kofi, we give you drinks.
The head of the family, Barima Esien and his elders, we give you drinks.
If we have met here then it is for the good of the town.
We pray for prosperity and good health for Nananom Kwa Nkrumah, Akyeampong and Korankye.
I also pray for prosperity and good health for myself,
Kwasi Kratia who has been asked to pour the libation,
We pray for good health for all the Akyeame or linguists who serve Nana Nketia.

People of Agona Abrem who hooted at a tiger and by that act caused his death,
People whose appellation is "ever victorious"; we pray for you.
We pray for the Great stool in Agona Abrem; for all the war-lords in the town and for those gentlemen who have come here to record our history.
If we have lived to see this year then we pray to see another year;
We pray for peace;
We pray that we shall not be afflicted again by untimely deaths;
Great God and all our dead ancestors,
Hasten and come and take drinks.

Origins and early history

Q. Where did you come from to settle in this area?

A. We came from Takyiman. This town was not built in a day, we fought many wars before coming to settle here. At Twifo there was separation because we were so many.

Q. Did you come straight from Twifo to this place?

A. We settled at so many places, one being Twiakwa, located on a hill near river Pra. When we left Twiakwa we fought with Wassas and drove them behind the Pra. We then returned to Twiakwa, from there to Agonankrosu, where we met a fetish called Oboyaa which killed many of our people. We then came to this place where we met the fetish Bosomaya.

Q. What is the name of the god?

A. It is called Bosomaya.

Q. Why was this town called Agona?

A. We brought the name Agona from Takyiman.

Q. Who was your chief who led you from Takyiman?

A. Nana Anim.

Q. Have you heard of clans?

A. Yes. Our chief who led us from Takyiman belongs to the Agona clan.

Q. Have you got any more clans?

A. Yes, Anona, Abrade, Asona and Tweafo.

Q. Have you heard of Ntoro?

A. We call it here Agyabosom.

Q. What does it mean?

A. It means every person's soul belongs to the father's, because your father had given it to you at birth. So you pay homage by slaughtering a hen or goat.

Q. Have you any special response to greetings?

A. Yes, Ahenewa, Anyaado and Abraw.

Q. What are the meanings?

A. Our ancestors did not tell us the meanings.

Q. Have you heard of something called Bosompra and Bosommuru?

A. We can't tell you the meaning because we term Bosompra, Bosommuru, Abraw etc. the same things. Ahenewa means "Oheneba" or the descendants of chief. Abraw also means "Abrafoo ba" children of executioners. "Anyaado" means Ahenfo or royals.

Q. What about Bosompra and Bosommuru?

A. We have Bosomtwe and Akowakra equivalents respectively. Bosomtwe is the same as Anyaado.

Q. Did you meet anybody on this land on your first arrival?

A. We came to meet the Efutu, who were around but on this land there was nobody.

Q. Did you come to meet Ankaase?

A. The people of Ankaase came to meet us.

Q. Where did they come from?

A. The people of Ankaase are Wassas.

Q. Which people did you share borders with?

A. Eguafo and Ankaase people were in a place called Tonkosrano but later left for their present location.

When we arrived here we settled on land belonging to the Eguafo. The Eguafo chief Kofi Ntuah made this known to our chief Kwa-Tawiah and they decided to come to an agreement. The claims of the Eguafo chief were true because upon leaving Takyiman we first settled at Duakwa, Kwasiadum and Agonakoroso before coming here. Our chief paid for the land with a drum of palm oil called in those days "BARIBA". So this land now belongs to us.

Q. So it means the whole Abirem state came to meet the Eguafo State?

A. Yes.

Q. When Nana was talking he mentioned the Efutu State, what does that mean?

A. There is a saying which says, Efutu is the continuation of the Abirem state or Efutu has a common border with Abirem; we came to meet Efutu already settled and we still do share a common border with them.

Q. So it means that Abirem has a common border with Efutu, Eguafo, Jukwa and Wassas?

A. Yes, but the Denkyira people came to join Jukwa later.

Q. Did you share borders with the Twifos?

A. We had a border with them at Kodotri near a river called Ane.

Q. When you Agonas arrived from Takyiman did you come to meet Etsis?

A. Yes, we even now share borders with them. The Denkyiras in the area of Hemang, near the river called Ane, are Etsis.

Q. Have you not got Etsis in any of the Abirem towns?

A. Asuantsi are Etsis.

Q. Asuantsi is in Abura, but I want Etsis from Abirem.

A. There are no Etsis in Abirem.

Q. When you came to meet Eguafo,Efutu and Jukwa (Denkyira) were there chiefs?

A. They were states being ruled by chiefs.

Q. When you came to meet Eguafo, Efutu and Jukwaamu what agreements did you reach with them?

A. We agreed as to which areas each should be and as such decided on our borders.

Q. Did they not fight or dispute over land with you?

A. We fought wars all the way from Takyiman to this place, but over here there was understanding among all those people sharing borders with us.

Q. On your way from Takyiman what language did your ancestors speak?

A. Twi language.

Q. What language was the Eguafo, Jukwaa and Efutu people speaking when your ancestors arrived?

A. Some spoke words like 'Mise' 'Misee' 'Medɛ' (which means the same "I say".

Q. Do you think the Abirem state with particular reference to Agona has changed from its original language or it is the same? e.g. 'Misee'

A. Due to many languages around us our original language has been altered.

Q. What is the position of the chief of Agona to the stool of Abirem?

A. The chief of Agona is the Adontenhene to the stool of Abirem.

Q. Why was he made the Adontenhene?

A. He was the person who fought wars to get this place for the Abirem to stay?

Q. What is the duty of Adontenhene?

A. The Adontenhene has got powers to rebuke the omanhene if he goes wrong. Likewise the Omanhene to the Adontenhene.

Q. What were the functions of the Adontenhene?

A. The Adontenhene judges cases but if he is unable to deal with the case he transfers the case to the Omanhene's court.

Q. Have you got some towns under the Adontenhene?

A. Dwabor, Ntontonso, Aturokrom, Antem, Asakan, Anteadze, Prakrom, Huohuom and Asikan.

Q. Are all these villages or towns?

A. They are all villages on the Adontenhene's land.

Q. What are the important towns in Abirem?

A. Essiam, Burukoso, Berasi, Saman, Agona, Ankaase, Dwabor.

Q. Name some of your ancestors who led you from Takyiman to this place.

A. Akosua Akyere who brought the stool together with Bosom Nketia. She delivered children here namely Kwakese and Nana Asankoma.

Q. Could you give us a list of your kings?

A.
1. Bosom Nketia
2. Kofi Yaafo
3. Kojo Amppoe
4. Barima Kwakese
5. Barima Asankoma I
6. Abranifa (woman)
7. Nana Asiedu
8. Nana Brako
9. Nana Kwakese II
10. Nana Kwa Tawia
11. Nana Tɛipong I
12. Nana Tɛipong II
13. Nana Asankoma II
14. Nana Adu
15. Nana Bosom Nketia II.

Q. Who is the best remembered chief, and why?

A. Nana Bosom Nketia, he founded the town of Agona and he brought us to Agona.

Q. Who else?

A. Barima Kwakese, he made this town to gain a good foundation so as to progress.

Q. Name some of your ancestors who reigned and did something significant worth remembering.

A. Barima Kwakese did many things; looking after many people. Nana Kofi Yaafo, he brought us together to live in peace and prosperity.

Q. Name any significant event which took place during the reign of Barima Kwakese?

A. During the reign of Barima Kwakese, the slave trade was abolished. But he applied for permission from the Colonial rulers to buy slaves but died before the reply came.

Q. What was his age by then.

A. I was not born by then. I was told.

Q. What are your Oaths?

A. The chief's (Sunday) 'Kwasida' and Asafo's is 'Fida' (Friday)

1. Nana Bosom Nketia II, Kwasida.
2. Asafo 'Fida'.

Q. What brought about these oaths?

A. We fought in a war and lost many leaders on a Sunday.

Q. What time did you fight?

A. It was during Nana Bosom Nketia's reign.

Note another person's:

He says that during Nketia's reign certain royals went out to dig for gold. They did not return because of an accident in the pit.

Q. Any appellations of the king or kings for which they are best remembered?

A. Nana Kwakese had "Kwakese Birempong" meaning he had money that could buy slaves.

It also means because of his bravery and victories in wars over many chiefs that gave him the name, Kwakese Birempong.

Q. What is the symbol of the chief's palanquin?

A. "Ewudie". The family symbol of the chief. We also have Linguist Staff with symbols called "Abremu Kanea", meaning "We are leading" (Adontenhene leads). (Lit. the light of Abirem).

Q. Have you got any more of such articles with symbols or insignia?

A. We have one. "Okropong a wakyere Osebɔ" meaning 'Eagle that has caught a tiger, and (2) "Kotoko".

Q. You said in your libation that "ABREMAN which hoots a tiger to make it ran". What is the meaning?

A. It simply means we are brave enough to make a tiger turn away with our hooting.

Q. How many wing chiefs and divisional chiefs have you in Abirem?

A. Omanhene Berasi
Adontenhene - Agona
Kyidomhene - Essiam
Gyasehene - Saman
Krontihene - Dwabor
Twafohene - Ankaase.

Q. What are the work of these chiefs?

A. They have to plan with their elders all necessary developments in their town and arrange meetings with them called the State Council to discuss issues relating to the town.

Q. What is the system of inheritance in Agona?

A. It is by the Matrilineal type of inheritance.

Q. Could you explain this?

A. Succession to office and inheritance is traced through the female line.

Q. Have you any Festival?

A. Yes. It is performed in the middle of October. The chief puts down his stool and we keep vigil over it for 8 days without going anywhere. After that we go and purify our god."Bosom Aya". After 8 days the Asafo company starts drumming and merry-making. We have no Ahobaa or Odwira festivals. Ours is the Eguadoto festival.

Q. Have you got any drumming, dancing or music groups.

A. Asafo — played by the Ankɔbea.
Aprede
Atɔprɛ — we play when there is trouble, it is played with three drums.

Q. Have you stopped playing?

A. No, we play only when there is trouble.

Q. What about Asafo by the Ankobea; where did you get it from?

A. When our ancestors arrived from Takyiman they saw that it was something which existed and was necessary for the state. We have a lot of them, namely: Ankobea, Wombir, Anyampa and Akyem. Our ancestors came to meet Ankobea so they joined Ankobea.

Q. Does it mean that when you arrived here from Takyiman there were some people around who played Asafo and you copied?

A. No, we brought Asafo together with the stool from Takyiman.

Q. Were you taught this by the Whiteman?

A. No, we had our Asafo before the Whiteman came.

Q. Who are those who belong to the Asafo?

A. They are inhabitants of our own town; we have Asafohenfo, Singers and Gong-gong beaters.

Q. What did you do with Asafo in early times?

A. We used it when there was war. This was always available to the chief.

Q. Does it mean that when it is played every young man should take up his gun and get prepared for war?

A. Yes. If a young man hears of the drum, he would inquire about the matter, and if it is war he takes up his gun immediately. Sometimes someone gets missing in the town or in the bush. When this happens the chief is informed and the Safohene is also informed and then people gather around, the drums are beaten and the gathering is told the news.

Q. You made mention of guns, but guns were brought by the Whiteman, so before the Whiteman's arrival what instruments did the Asafo use for war?

A. Our ancestors knew how to make guns before the arrival of the Whiteman. They knew how to operate it and could make fire too. Before guns came we also used stones and clubs when fighting.

Trade

Q. Before the arrival of the Whiteman what was your main occupation?

A. We were farmers.

Q. How do you sell or exchange your foodstuffs?

A. We traded by barter, the Elminas had fish and we of the Abirem state and Eguafo were all farmers, so we exchanged our foodstuffs for fish.

Q. So no money was involved?

A. Yes. We exchanged some of our food for gold dust.

Q. Have you heard of salt?

A. We exchanged salt also with our foodstuffs.

Q. Did you go for salt from the Coast and sell it in the interior?

A. Yes, it was open to anybody who could travel such long distances.

Q. To which people?

A. To the Wassas, Asantes, in exchange for gold and slaves.

Q. What was the ancient route to Asante?

A. It was by way of Jukwaim, Dunkwa and to Oboasi and Akrokerri. There is also another route by way of Manpowso, Ateku and Hunni Valley which is shorter.

Q. How did you cross the Pra River to Asante?

A. There was somebody with a boat over it whom you give salt to when going and give him anything you get when coming. By this payment you could be ferried across the river.

Q. How long did it take for these trips to be made?

A. It ranged from one to three months.

Q. In which container is the salt put, when it is being sent to Asante?

A. It was put in a beaten bark of a tree called "Kyɛnkyɛn" which is also used in making cloth.

Q. Have you heard of Kola, what do you do with it?

A. The kola was also taken out of Abirem. There was a saying that "if your kola does not reach 1,000 you won't go to Krachi" which means if your kola doesn't reach 1,000 you will not get anything worth if it is sent outside.

Q. So you went as far as to Krachi?

A. They went as far as to Bonduogou and Gyaman.

Q. So you traded before the arrival of the Whiteman?

A. Yes.

Q. What did your ancestors bring on the return trips after taking their goods to Bonduogou etc.?

A. They brought cloth and gold dust.

Q. Did you have gold dust?

A. Yes, when it rains you find gold dust just in the ground.

Q. Don't you have places where you dig them?

A. Yes, we have some of the gold grounds here in this town called Kweikumaso.

Q. During which chief's reign did the Portuguese arrive?

A. Nana Bosom Nketia.

Q. Which kind of trade did your ancestors trade with the first Portuguese to arrive at Elmina?

A. We traded by barter.

Q. Which kind of goods did the Whites bring?

A. Cloth, drinks from the Whites which we exchanged with palm kernel, palm oil, which is used in making soap.

Q. Tell me more about slavery?

A. Our ancestors went with their Salt and Kola to the North and anybody who wanted any of them gave them slaves in exchange or money.

Q. So your ancestors never took up arms unlawfully against any town for the capture of slaves for sale?

A. No, our ancestors went to buy them from the North with their own money and property.

Q. Did the Asantes bring slaves to sell at the Coast?

A. Our ancestors went to buy from the Asantes in Asante.

Q. Did the Asantes line the slaves up to the coast to sell?

A. Yes. They brought them to us and we in turn sold them to the Whites.

Religion

Q. Before the arrival of the Whites and the Mohammedans and the consequent introduction of christianity and Islam did you know God?

A. Our ancestors worshipped whatever they believed in it as god be it a stone, a stick or any thing; we call it obosom.

Q. Apart from obosom did you not know there was a Supreme God?

A. Before we poured libation we made mention of the name God (Onyame) but we don't know who taught us.

Q. Did you know of God but did not worship Him like how it is done today?

A. Yes.

Q. What are the names of your Abosom? (In this Agona)

A. They are, Bosom Aya, Yokoti, Nketia, Amahiara, Nankam, Ablah, Mayensu, Abakah, Oboyaa, Tukanfra, and Kankanfo.

Q. Did you worship all?

A. Yes.

Q. What is the difference between Suman and Obosom?

A. It is like medicine which does good and bad at the same time. When one does someone wrong his soul is taken to this Suman and he dies. That is, his soul is killed. Suman is worshipped, but Obosom is called abosom, that is, one visits it yearly to present himself to it.

Q. When you poured libation you called the names of your departed ancestors and abosom. What does that mean?

A. It means we believe in life after death. So they heard all that we said.

Q. Before the arrival of the Whitemen did you know of God's existence?

A. We did not know of God.

Q. Why did you know of God's name then?

A. We know there was a Supreme God; Creator of Heaven and Earth.

Q. Have you heard of Nananom Pow?

A. No.

Q. Did you worship Nananom Pow in this Abirem State?

A. No, it was worshipped in Fante, Mankessim.

Q. Did you settle at places before finally arriving here from Takyiman?

A. Yes, three places, namely Tokonsuanu, just three miles from this town, Abrade, four miles from this town; and Ayensosu.

Q. Do you go to pour libation at these places each year?

A. Yes, but in our ancestors time.

Q. Since your arrival, have you had any land disputes with some people?

A. Yes, the Wassas.

Q. Where have you a border with the Wassas?

A. At Pra River.

Q. Who was not guilty?

A. The Abirem state. (It was all the Abirem state).

Q. Have you Agona people had any internal disputes?

A. No.

Q. Have you any written records on your history?

A. No.

Q. Have you heard of the people known as Akɔmfo?

A. Yes.

Q. Who are they?

A. Everybody has his own ɔbosɔm and these Akɔmfo told us how their individual gods or abosom are worshipped or served.

Q. What is the work of the Akɔmfo?

A. They report to the chief and his elders things that are wrong in the town, so that a cock or anything is slaughtered to make the thing to leave.

When some one is sick we go to the Akɔmfo and they tell us what is wrong with that fellow and we pour libation to that Akɔmfo's abosom so that the sickness goes away.

Q. Are they still in this town?

A. Yes.

Q. What do you think would be the future of the Akɔmfo and do you think they can stay for a longer period? What are they doing now?

A. It is something we came to meet so we can't tell if it will cease in the near future.

Q. What is meant by Suman?

A. Suman is a mixture of earth and herbs used as medicine. They are administered by the Akɔmfo.

Q. Before the Institution of Clinics and hospitals how were you healing the sick?

A. The sick ones were taken to the Akomfo who apply herbs on them and heal them.

Q. How do you call the Akomfo who heal the sick?

A. They are called Herbalists or Adunsifo.

Q. Have you had any land disputes with any other town sharing borders with you?

A. Yes.

Q. Why?

A. We had disputes with the Wassas, because they got our land we met our ancestors on from us.

It is even pending because one cannot go beyond a river bank and claim a land there, we share borders with them at Bosompra.

Q. Have you had any land disputes with other Abirem towns or Efutu?

A. We had one with Berase.

Q. Why?

A. We had the land disputes during the reign of Nana Apraku Yaw of Agona and Nana Kodie of Berase, but we settled it peacefully since we understood that we were all one people, since then we have not had any more disputes.

Q. Have you got written records on the land disputes with Wassas?

A. We have written records.

Q. Are they with you now or with the government?

A. We have ours and government has its own.

Q. Do you know of anybody who has made a similar collection of the oral traditions of your state?

A. No one has collected our oral traditions but we have written records of our own.

Q. If I want to marry any woman from this town what are the arrangements?

A. You have to see the parents and the family of the woman. You go to see the woman's father with a bottle of akpeteshie, for the first time. When the father agrees to that effect another bottle of akpeteshie is presented, known as 'Mefaho'. After that a bottle of schnapps is presented. The woman's head drink is 4s.6d. (45p) Dadakro. The woman's head money: £3.12/- (₵7.20).

Q. Give me some of the former names of money?

A. Predwan: £8.1.6d. (₵16.15)
Esuaa : £1. 7/- (₵2.70)
Dwoasuru
Esuanu
Esuasa
Osuako
Bend : £7.00 (₵14.00).

Q. During your ancestral time when you are fined by the chief's court and you are unable to pay, what happens?

A. You are taken to Elmina and sold if no one from your family is able to pay the fine.

When you have a case at the chief's court you are normally fined "Esuaa" — £1. 7/-. (₵2.70).
Mekoa — (9d.) — (9p.)
Ntakummiensa (2s. 3d.) — 22½p.

E S I A M

RESPONDENTS:

Kobina Ɛsson	- Stool Elder
Kobina Boateng	- Regent
Kwame Kai	- Linguist
Kwaku Ahyiam	- Linguist.

LIBATION: Twi

Twedeampon Kwame, ɛnnɛ Wukuada, bɛgye nsa nom.
Asɛm a ɛwɔ hɔ ne sɛ,
Yefi Takyiman na yɛbaa ha,
Ɔhene a ɔde yɛn bae no,
Yɛfrɛ no Nana Afradu,
Otsiado, Yanfu Akwatia, bɛgye nsa nom.
Otsiado Awaakye Kwasi Kwao, bɛgye nsa nom.
Otsiado Kwesi Acquah, bɛgye nsa nom.
Otsiado Nana Bempong Owusu, bɛgye nsa nom.
Otsiado Nana Tawiah Amprofi, bɛgye nsa nom.
Otsiado Barima Kwesi Nyan, bɛgye nsa nom.
Otsiado, Barima Wiredu Akoful,
Otsiado, Barima Wiredu II
Otsiado, Nana Tawia Amprofi II
Otsiado, Nana Bempong Owusu II, mommra mɛgye nsa nom.
Nana Amoako Atta, gye nsa nom.
Nana Pomuyɛwu, gye nsa nom.
Nana Akuoko, bɛgye nsa nom.
Nana Abaka a ɔwɔ Akwakyir, bɛgye nsa nom.
"Kokwaa homa Annan", yɛsom wo yɛnnom, bɛgye nsa nom.
Ɛnnɛ Wuku sɛ yɛfrɛ mo a,
Na yɛbɔ mo abodzin nyina,
Mma esiane biara nnsian yɛn
Surowi Amma, bɛgye nsa nom.
Ɛmma esiane biara nnsian yɛn.

English Translation

Tweadeampon Kwame, on this Wednesday, come and drink,
What we are saying today is that we came from Takyiman to settle here.
The person who brought us here is called Nana Afradu.
The next chief was Yanfu Akwatia, here is drink.
Nana Awuakye Kwasi Kwao, here is drink!
Nana Kwasi Acquah, here is drink!
Nana Bempong Owusu, here is drink!
Nana Tawia Amprofi, here is drink!

Nana Kwasi Nyan, here is drink!
Barima Wiredu Akoful,
Barima Wiredu II,
Barima Tawiah Amprofi II,
Nana Bempong Owusu II, all of you must come and drink.
Nana Amoako Atta, here is drink!
Nana Pomuyɛwu, here is drink!
Nana Akuoko, come and drink!
Nana Abaka who stays at Akwakyir, here is drink!
Nana Pippim, here is drink!
"Kokwaahoma Annan", that which we worship, come and drink.
When we call upon all of you this Wednesday,
then we call you not to let any danger befall us.
River Surowi, here is drink,
Do not let danger befall us.

Q. Where did you come from to settle in this area?

A. We came from Takyiman.

Q. Why did you leave your former place?

A. Because of the difficulties we faced there. We were having constant battles with other groups.

Q. How did you leave?

A. We came to this place on foot. Throughout our migration, our stool was with us.

Q. Who was your leader?

A. Nana Ɛwuakye Kwasi Kwao.

Q. Did you come straight from Takyiman to this place?

A. No. We went and settled at Krobo area at a place called Abakakyi. From there we went to Komakyiri which is now an ancient site. It was from that place that we moved to Esiam.

Q. Have you moved out of Esiam to settle at any other place?

A. No.

Q. Did you not go by way of Anomabo when you were coming from Takyiman?

A. Yes. When we arrived at Anomabo we stayed there for a time. Upon realising that the land there was not spacious enough for us the Omanhene of Anomabu informed us that we should move to this area as the Omanhene was his friend. When we arrived here the Omanhene received us warmly and gave us land to live on. He also gave us the title of Nkyidɔm. Our chief is thus the Nkyidɔmhene of Abirem Traditional area.

Q. Do you have any ancient sites at Anomabu?

A. No.

Q. Did you come with any gods from Takyiman?

A. No. We came with only our stool.

Q. Have you heard of clans?

A. Yes.

Q. What is the clan of your first chief who brought you here?

A. He is of the Ekoona clan.

Q. Is this clan still the ruling clan?

A. Yes.

Q. What are the other clans in this town?

A. Ebiradzi, Anona, Asona.

Q. Do you know anything about Ntoro or Egyabosom?

A. Every person inherits his father's soul and this is linked to a god. Annually the father and the children sacrifice to this god. This is the concept of Egyabosom. When the children become adults their children also will follow their father's soul and god. If there is a certain animal which the father does not eat the son also does the same.

Q. What are the names of some of these Egyabosoms?

A. Bosompra, Aborabora, Amissah, Asirifi, Nketia, Abaka.

Q. How did Egyabosom originate?

A. In the olden days there was the worship of God and that of fetishes. Anything which contributed to the spiritual upliftment of man was adopted.

Q. Can you say that the animal forbidden to be eaten by a person's Egyabosom is that which he worships?

A. What the person does not eat is what naturally becomes his totemic animal.

Q. What are the greetings associated with this Egyabosom?

A. Abraw, Anyaado, Obere, Ahenewa and Emu.

Q. Did your people meet other people here when you came to this place?

A. We did not meet any people here.

Q. How did your chief become the Nkyidɔmhene?

A. When our ancestors arrived here from Anomabu, they approached the Berase chief who was already here for land. After being granted the land he also appointed the Esiam chief as the Nkyidɔmhene and he swore the oath of allegiance to that effect.

Q. Who were your neighbours in the olden days?

A. Eguafo, Jukwaim, Effutu and Wassaw in the North.

Q. Do you share a common border with Twifo?

A. No.

Q. Was Jukwaim organised into a state?

A. The people of Jukwa were originally Etsis. Before the arrival of the Dankyirahene, the chief of Jukwaim was an Omanhene.

Q. Who are the Etsis?

A. They are those who lived originally at a place without coming from nowhere. They are the indigenous people of a place.

Q. Where are the Etsis located?

A. Jukwaim, Eguafo, Asebu, Effutu, Mankessim ans Simbew.

Q. What language did you speak when you arrived here?

A. Fante. It has not changed.

Q. Have you heard about the town called Afragyei?

A. No.

Q. Could you give a list of your kings?

A. Nana Afradu
" Yanfu Akwatia
" Awuakye Kwasi Kwao
" Kwesi Acquah
" Bempong Owusu
" Tawia Amprofi
" Kwesi Nyan
" Wiredu Akoful
" Wiredu II
" Tawia Amprofi II
" Bempong Owusu

Q. Which of your chiefs are best remembered?

A. Barima Wiredu. He beautified the town and greatly encouraged farming.

Q. Who were his contemporaries in Eguafo and Berase?

A. The Omanhene of Eguafo was Nana Kofi Ntuah and the Omanhene of Abirem was Nana Buabeng. He died on the stool.

Q. Were any of your chiefs destooled?

A. No. They all died on the stool. It is only the present chief who is facing destoolment charges and is as such not functioning.

Q. During which chief's reign did the Whitemen first arrive on the coast?

A. Nana Ewuakye Kwasi Kwao.

Q. Who was his contemporary at Abirem Berase?

A. Nana Kwaku Attah.

Q. Do you have any oaths?

A. 1. Yes. "Barima Tawia Fida". This is because they moved out of Takyiman on a Friday on a long journey southwards.

2. "Asafo Yawda". On our way from Takyiman there was a battle on a Thursday and seven of our warriors died. This we considered to be really a tragedy hence this oath.

Warfare

Q. What is an Asafo Company?

A. It was used in the olden days as an army. It was always alert and when there was a threat to the state or to the chief they were mobilised to oppose such a threat. Whitemen did not teach us to organise the Asafo in this country.

Q. What is the name of the Asafo Company?

A. It is called Ankobea Company.

Q. How did it acquire that name?

A. Every Asafo group is supposed to have a name. That was why we adopted this name. The British donated a bugle to the company during the time of British Colonial rule.

Q. What objects do the Asafo Ankobea have?

A. 1. A flag, 2. Drums; for summoning the members of the company in cases of emergency such as a battle.

Q. What was the main function of the Asafo in the olden days?

A. If there is crisis somewhere the chief informs the Safohene who summons the group with the beating of drums. The group then thinks of the best way to solve the situation which has arisen.

Q. Is this the only function of the Asafo?

A. No. When someone dies in the town the Asafo Company helps in the arrangement towards the person's burial. The Asafo is present at the wake-keeping of the deceased and accompanies the dead body to its graveside.

Annually too the Asafo sacrifices at the place where its drums are kept.

The Asafo Company also helps in tracing missing people. In such instances the Safohene is informed, he summons the Asafo and then a search party is formed to look for the missing person and bring him back dead or alive. If dead we bury him but presently the dead person can be burried if the registration of the dead person has been effected.

Q. What weapons did you use before the arrival of the Europeans?

A. Swords and sticks. It was after the coming of the Europeans that we acquired guns.

Q. During which king's reigh did this happen?

A. This happened during the reign of Ewuakye Kwasi Kwao.

Q. How is the Asafo armed? Does the chief buy the guns for the Asafo or the Asafo members purchased them themselves?

A. It is not the chief who buys the guns. This is the responsibility of the individual. Every father has to purchase a gun for his son who has become an adult.

Government and Institutions

Q. What are the functions of the Nkyidɔmhene in the state of Abirem?

A. If there is anything necessary to be decided upon the Omanhene and the various chiefs cannot decide on the matter if the Kyidɔmhene is not present. He has to add his final voice of consent.

Q. If the Omanhene's seat at Berase is vacant what role does the Nkyidɔmhene play in the installation of a new one?

A. If the stool is vacant the Nkyidɔmhene as well as the other chiefs go to Berase to discuss, elect and install a new chief. Then the Nkyidɔmhene sends ¢4.00 worth of Eggs to the newly elected chief.

Q. What is the old traditional name for ¢4.00?

A. Ossua.

Q. How is a chief elected in this town?

A. The town elders meet together with the young men of this town where they decide to go and see the royal clan in this town, the Ekoɔna to select somebody to be the chief of this town. The town then selects people to go and inform the Omanhene at Berase who in turn informs his various wing chiefs who then decide on an oath to install the newly elected chief. After this the chief is put indoors.

Q. Do you have a Queenmother?

A. We do have some here, but due to the present dispute this seat is vacant.

Q. Does the queenmother have a stool?

A. No.

Q. Is the queenmother of the same clan as the chief?

A. It is the chief who selects the queenmother. It can be either his sister, mother or a near relative.

Q. What are the rules of succession in this town?

A. It is by matrilineal inheritance. But the elders of this town might decide to give it to a son of the former chief.

Q. So is succession either matrilineal or patrilineal?

A. No. The son of the former chief only acts as a regent until a new chief is elected.

Q. What are the emblems of the Esiam stool?

A. We have a sword, palanquin, horns. In fact we do have all the regalia associated with chieftaincy.

Q. How is the horn sounded?

A. "Nkasedu akora wɔnkae tete" - Nkase is one of the town that we settled in on our way from Takyiman. So that this epithet means that the chief of the people at that period at Nkase is reminding his people not to forget what he did for them at Nkase.

Q. During which chief's reign was this?

A. Nana Ewuakye Kwasi Kwao.

Q. How many festivals do you have here?

A. The main festival we have here is Eguakron. The chief informs the people of time for the festival. It is usually held in September. The Tufuhene, on the Thursday preceding the festival, fires a gun to herald in the festival. On Friday morning there is dancing and drumming by the Asafo Company of this town. On Saturday, the chief sits in state to receive homage from the people. During this time there is "Eguadoto". Then the people gather firewood which will be presented to the chief. Then the Asafo starts drumming from the outskirts of the town to the chief's palace. The Tufuhene then presents his firewood before the rest of the people present theirs. After this, the week after is one in which nobody does any significant work like going to farm. The next Sunday we all go to church to offer our thanks to God.

Q. Apart from this don't you have any other festival?

A. We have the "Burandantaa". This is held in July. Muskets are fired and then herbs are prepared and put in a pot and placed at a specific place. Any child who steps on this is hooted at and water splashed on him. After a month these herbs are sprinkled throughout the whole town.

Q. Do you have Ahobaa?

A. No.

Q. Does the Nkyidomhene attend the "Eguadoto" festival of the Omanhene?

A. Yes. We do attend this festival. We send out customary eggs and an amount of money being ₵1.05 and ₵2.10 (1 guinea) or in the olden days Essuasa.

Q. Before the arrival of the Europeans what was your currency?

A. We used gold dust as the medium of exchange.

Q. What was used in measuring gold dust?

A. A spoon or "abrambo" which was an object shaped like a spoon which is a heavy object. It had different units. There was the taku unit, etc.

Q. Did you not have any thing similar to Asante gold weights?

A. Yes. This came earlier than the "abrambo".

Q. How did you obtain gold?

A. It was obtained in many ways. It was either left as a legacy or finding it by chance or finding it on the surface of the earth after a heavy rainfall.

Q. Did you not dig for gold?

A. We did. There was a mine behind Jukwaim and also on the River Kakum and at the grove called Abaka.

Q. What are the marriage rites in this town?

A. You approach the father and if he agrees he makes you pay an anount which could be either ¢6.00 or ¢4.00. The father then decides to see the rest of the relatives and they then agree to give out the child to the man.

Q. Do you have any funeral dirges in this town?

A. When we sing them the past deeds of the person are remembered. It is also used to remember past events and history.

Traditional Economy

Q. What was your main occupation before the arrival of the Europeans?

A. We were farmers and hunters. Our ancestors travelled to the coast to buy fish.

Q. Did those at the coast not bring fish to sell here?

A. No.

Q. Have you heard about salt?

A. Salt was manufactured at Elmina and our ancestors went to Elmina to obtain salt.

Q. Did some of your ancestors travel inland to trade?

A. Yes, some went as far as to the North. Those who went to the North sold salt there and brought back yams.

Q. How long did it take for such a journey to be made?

A. Usually about three months and sometimes even more, even a year.

Q. What about kola?

A. It was also sent Northwards but not from this town but our neighbours do so.

Q. Did these traders bring back slaves?

A. Yes.

Q. What was the relationship between a master and a slave?

A. They lived cordially. A slave was treated as being one of the members of the family.

Post European Period

Q. When the Europeans arrived on the coast what were you salling to them?

A. The Europeans brought cloth and we exchanged this for rubber.

Q. What was the medium of exchange?

A. Gold dust.

Q. Have you heard of the slave trade?

A. Yes. Slaves were obtained from the North.

Q. Were slave raids organised by the people here to obtain slaves?

A. No.

Q. How were you treating these slaves?

A. They were treated nicely so that they would not run away.

Religious Beliefs

Q. Were your ancestors christians, Mohhamedans or ancestral worshippers?

A. They worshipped gods (abosom).

Q. What is obosom?

A. They are spirits living in the bush. A thick concentration of trees in the forest scared away our ancestors and they declared it a fetish grove.

Q. What is suman?

A. Suman is different from bosom. Suman is personal creation. He mixes certain herbs with eggs and refers to it as suman.

Q. What are the uses of suman?

A. It is used for medicinal purposes.

Q. Did your ancestors know of God?

A. Yes, but it was not worshipped as it is done now.

Q. Have you heard of Nananom Mpow?

A. Yes. It was at Menkessim.

Q. Did you worship it?

A. No.

Q. Did you bring gods from Takyiman or you met them when you came here?

A. We met them here.

Q. Have you got fetish priests or Akomfo?

A. Yes. They act as intermediaries between the gods and the people. They are required by these gods to interprete what they say. One becomes a fetish priest through being possessed or inheriting it from a relative.

Q. What functions did these fetish priests perform?

A. They helped to pacify the gods by praying and offering the necessary sacrifices to the gods.

Q. Do you think there will come a time when there will be no fetish priests?

A. I cannot tell.

Statecraft

Q. What are the functions of linguists?

A. He is the first person in the town who hears any news from outside. For instance any visitor to the town has to see him before seeing the chief. He also discusses with the chief matters of state importance.

Q. Were they also sent to other towns or states?

A. They were sent to represent the chief at other towns and states. They had with them the linguist's staff. If the chief decided to go they were also accompanied by linguists.

Q. What are the functions of the chief's servants (Nhenkwaa)?

A. They accompany the chief to state functions. Some hold the sword and another holds the specially made broom (mena). Anybody who wants to talk to the chief must contact these people first.

Q. What was this broom (mena) used for?

A. It was used to drive away insects from distracting the chief. It was also used in sending an envoy to another town.

Q. What happened to these envoys if they were manhandled?

A. The chief who sent the envoy approached the chief of the other town for matters to be settled since the chief considered this manhandling as an insult to himself. In the ancient times states went to war for such reasons.

Ancient Sites and Relics

Q. Are there any ancient sites in your state?

A. Yes. There are ancient sites at Abakakyir and Nkomnakyir.

Q. Do you have any ancient relics?

A. Yes, short horns, elephant teeth. (This was used as a horn but it got burnt).

Q. Have there been any litigations over land boundaries between your town and any of the neighbouring states?

A. We have had one with Mampong and Jukwaim. We lost both cases.

Q. Where can we find a copy?

A. At the National Archives.

Q. Have there been any internal constitutional disputes over succession and destoolment of the king, wing chiefs etc.?

A. There has not been any of such disputes.

Q. Do you know of anybody who has made similar collection of oral traditions of your town?

A. Nobody has made such collection.

Q. What is on top of the linguist's staff?

A. 1. "Oguan ne tsir ɔnyew wɔ nkwansɛn mu" literally meaning 'the head of a sheep does not get missing in the soup pot'.

2. "Apɛsɛ yɛ kɛse a ɔyɛ ma dufɔkyeɛ" literally meaning 'the hedgehog fattens itself only for the rotten tree. If your son gets money he is still under you.

3. "Ɔbosomaketew, deɛ ɛhyɛ me yi na wobehu adane, na nea ɛwɔ m'adaka mu deɛ wunhu". Literally meaning 'the chameleon can only change his colour according to what he sees.

4. "Nyankopɔn ba Kwesi Kɔtɔ, ɔse: deɛ obedi me nam obenya mpren". Literally meaning, the crab is saying that anybody who eats it would only get its finger-nails. When there is anybody who wants to cheat this town he cannot.

Appendix 1

Abrem Traditional King Lists

1925 (a)	1925 (b)
Ahinfrie	Ahinfrie
Kwesi Nkwa	Kwesi Nkwa
Buabin Panyin	Buabin Panyin
Kweku Arhin	Kweku Ahin
Firampon	Firampon
Otabil	Otabil
Kobina Foli	Kwabena Foli
Kweku Arhin Kuma	Kweku Ahin Kuma
Kurankyi Kofi	Kurankyi Kofi
Kweku Atta	

(a) Petition G.N.A. C. C. 29 June 1925.

(b) " " " 9 July 1925.

1927: " " " 21 Sept. 1927.

Branpong
"a goodly "
Ahinfrie
Kwesi Inquah (Kwesi Nkwa)
Bourbin Payin
Kurankyi Kofi
Kweku Arhin
Cobina Oforie
Bourbin Kumah
Kweku Attah
Kwesie Amosie

1928: Petition G.N.A. C. C. 24 Nov. 1928.

Brapon
Arhinfrie
Kwesi Nkwa
Buabin Payin
Kweku Arhin
Firampon

Otabil
Kobina Forlie
Kweku Arhin Kuma
Kurankyi Kofi
Kweku Attah

1929 G.N.A. Cape Coast, May 1929.

'Testimony of Oman Linguist'

Chiriwia Kodie
Birampong
Ahinfri
Kwesi Nkwa
Kwesi Tuapoh
Buabin Payin
Kweku Ahin Payin
Kurankyi Otabil
Kobina Ofeti
Kweku Ahin Kuma
Yaw Frimpong
Yaw Buabin 1868, 1873.
Kweku Atta 1886.

Appendix 2

Rulers and other Abrem leaders as mentioned in Dutch and English sources :

	Date	Name	Description	Source
	1714	Asrampong	Caboceer	Dutch, English
	1714, 1715	Confu Amo	Caboceer Head chief	Dutch, English
	1721, 1734	Afrapong	Caboceer	English
	1724	Dode Tiebu	Grand Caboceer	Dutch
	1728	Attoom	Caboceer	English
	1740	Amadu	"	"
	1744	Assrapong	"	"
	1753	Ahinbrie	"	Dutch
d.	1757	Tiaiwah	"	English
	1757-1764	Birampon	"	"
	1760	Ahimmier	King	Dutch
	1760	Ahinfrie	Caboceer	"
	1770	Birampon	King	English
	1784, 1783	Quamina Affery	Caboceer	Dutch, English
	1784, 1821	Anti Coffee	Caboceer, King	English
	1837	Quacoe Ahin	King	Dutch
	1849	Affarie	King	Dutch
	1873	Buarbin	King	English
	1892, 1895	Kweku Atta		English

Culled from D. P. Harige in The International Journal of African Historical Studies Vol. 6, No. 1, 1973.

Appendix 3

1974:

Q. Could you give a list of kings who have sat on the stool of Abrem?

A. I cannot remember all but I will make an effort to give you as many as possible:-

Nana Twiwia Kodie

Nana Berempong

Nana Ahinfrie (He founded Berase town)

Nana Buabeng I

Nana Kwasi Fori I

Nana Kweku Atta

Nana Kwesi Fori II, destooled for drunkeness.
He came back to the stool but again destooled for old age.

Nana Kobriko

Nana Kweku Gyapea

Nana Nyamekye

Nana Twiwia Kodie Ababio II,

He abidicated; then called back to the stool; he was destooled but came back to the stool in 1966.

89058240995

b89058240995a

89058240995

b89058240995a